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Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

A STRATEGY FOR EQUIPPING SAINTS TO SHARE STORIES OF HOPE
AT SEATTLE'S UNIVERSITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Written by

COURTNEY A. GRAGER

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary
upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:


Richard Peace


Kurt Fredrickson

Date Received: March 14, 2016

A STRATEGY FOR EQUIPPING SAINTS TO SHARE STORIES OF HOPE
AT SEATTLE'S UNIVERSITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

COURTNEY A. GRAGER
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ABSTRACT

A Strategy for Equipping Saints to Share Stories of Hope at Seattle's University Presbyterian Church

Courtney A. Grager

Doctor of Ministry

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

2015

The Bold Love Initiative is a project developed to help shape disciples. Specifically, the initiative covers both spiritual formation and emotional growth and healing; the intersection of these two can be addressed within an environment of honesty, trust, and safety to develop courage in the hearts and souls of the participants. Bold Love will offer students the opportunity to discover their identity as God's beloved children, grow in their understanding and ability to tell the story of God at work in their lives, and grow in gratitude and freedom as they reflect on God's power and love at work in their healing.

The following project contains information on UPC, the context for the Bold Love Initiative pilot, as well as the theological and biblical foundations for the project. The project includes information on the theology of formation and healing and the importance of equipping saints to become disciples who make disciples, the first step of which is to have the capacity to understand and relate their own story of God at work in their life. Beyond this, the saints must be given tools and have the opportunity to practice using them in a safe environment so they can move out into their spheres of influence as winsome and effective ministers of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Content Reader: Richard Peace, PhD

Words: 217

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
PART ONE: MINISTRY CONTEXT	
INTRODUCTION	2
Chapter 1. THE CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH	9
PART TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION	
Chapter 2. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	32
Chapter 3. THEOLOGY OF FORMATION AND HEALING	47
PART THREE: EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR BOLD LOVE	
Chapter 4. THE BOLD LOVE PLAN	66
Chapter 5. IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS	83
APPENDICES	94
BIBLIOGRAPHY	129

PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to develop a program, Bold Love, that invites adult learners to discover their identity as God's beloved children and develop discipleship skills and spiritual practices that will equip them as active listeners ready to share their own stories of faith. The spiritual formation goals of Bold Love can be described as developing both internal strength and outward focus. The project draws from the fields of theology and psychology with insights from experts in spiritual formation from the past (Ignatius Loyola) to the present (Dallas Willard). Emotional healing is essential in the transformation of God's people; as information alone is insufficient for renewing the mind and shaping the heart, students will be encouraged to develop an integrated view of holistic faith leading to incarnational discipleship.

University Presbyterian Church (UPC) in Seattle, Washington is the target audience for Bold Love. UPC, a 3,300 member, regional church adjacent to the University of Washington (UW) and four miles from downtown Seattle, was founded over one hundred years ago as an outreach to UW; UPC continues to identify itself as a university church today. Scholars (Earl Palmer) and practical theologians alike (Bruce Larsen) have filled the pulpit and the pews are filled with people from all walks of life. Primary to UPC's identity is its connection to UW and The Inn, a weekly ministry to over 600 college students.

The first section of this paper will examine the history and current context of UPC and its identity as a university church. This identity impacts the entirety of ministry and is reflected in the stewardship of time, personnel, and property. As a member of the Presbyterian Church of America (PCUSA), UPC has deep ties to the Reformed tradition

of faith and places high value on things done rightly and in order.¹ Focused on learning rather than formation has kept most of this church from the holistic transformation to which Scripture calls us. As one visiting missionary from Kenya said succinctly “your information about God far exceeds your obedience to God at UPC.”² This is a painful truth.

The second section of this paper includes literature review and theological reflection upon the biblical mandate to love our neighbor as ourselves (discipleship) and love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength (transformation). This two-fold mandate has implications for the individual and the community alike and will be considered within the structure of UPC, its Reformed tradition, and its cultural context. Henri Nouwen and Dallas Willard (spiritual formation) and Brené Brown and Dan Allender (psychology) will provide some supporting structure for the project.

In order to equip the members of UPC as disciples transformed by the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, a pilot project, Bold Love, will be developed. The third segment of this project includes the goals and plan for Bold Love as well as the curriculum for the class. This initiative is designed to be highly interactive; students will engage the material and spiritual practices weekly. In addition, they will work in triads and dyads processing information, practicing listening and reflecting, and integrating the material. This new model, a departure from the traditional information transfer that occurs at UPC, will equip them as ambassadors for Christ in their daily lives outside the church walls. The

¹ *Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order 2013*. The Office of The General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Louisville, KY: 2013-2015, Kindle Edition.

² A Kenyan Missionary (name withheld for safety) shared this at a UPC staff meeting on March 10, 2015.

project submitted will include content and framework for a future class of longer duration.

As defined by Webster, a disciple is someone who accepts and helps to spread the teachings of a famous person.³ Defined by Jesus, a disciple is the one invited to come and see. Jesus says “follow me” and finally commands those following him to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). Jesus begins with an invitation to observe, followed by an invitation to discover, with him as our exemplar, and finally, he sends his followers out. Even then, he offers the Holy Spirit as companion, comforter, and guide. The Church needs to follow the leadership and example of our Lord in this process of invitation, discovery, and sending.

I was born and raised in the Presbyterian Church. I am the granddaughter of a Scotsman who made his living building Presbyterian churches up and down the west coast. My call to ministry came in a Presbyterian church and I have spent the last fifteen years serving in three Presbyterian churches; in each of them, the phrase every member a minister has been used somewhere in their vision or mission statement. However, all too often, the church has relegated its members to the sidelines of ministry.

Currently, I serve at University Presbyterian Church (UPC) in Seattle, Washington. UPC has a small percentage of the congregation involved in leadership of various kinds, including Elders, Deacons, committee members, Sunday School teachers, hospitality team. These leaders are asked to serve within our numerous programs and on task forces but are not invited into holistic formation; they are not actively being equipped as disciples or invited to serve as ministers. Peter exhorts the church: “In your

³ Miriam Webster Online. “Disciple.” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disciple> (accessed June 23, 2015).

hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). Too many of the congregants I serve are unprepared to share the good news of the gospel of Jesus; they do not have any experience or practice in sharing the reason for the hope that they have. I believe that understanding, embracing, and articulating our own faith narrative, and the narrative of God’s bigger story, are necessary elements of discipleship. It is only when we observe God’s work in the whole of our lives – past and present, and anticipate his presence and ongoing work in our future – that we are like Jesus and are prepared to be disciple-makers.

Leadership guru Max De Pree states, “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.”⁴ George Hinman, the Senior Pastor at UPC, has coined his own phrase for our people: formissional. This term is how he describes spiritually formed, missionally oriented followers of Jesus. While I appreciate this term, I do not observe actual formation taking place. Taking a close look at UPC and attempting to define our reality, it can clearly be seen that while we talk about making disciples, we are not, in fact doing so. For too long we have depended on small groups, Adult Education (Sunday school classes), and sermons to shape the hearts and minds of our congregants. Each of these is a good method for information delivery; however, they do not, generally speaking, lead to transformation. Educators confirm that people learn far more by experience than information gathering.⁵

Discipleship, by Jesus’ definition is relational, interactive, and personal. Jesus first says come and see. Then, he says: follow me. Finally, with his disciples prepared he

⁴ Max De Pree, *Leadership is an Art* (New York: Dell, 1989), 86.

⁵ Karen C. Smith, “Teaching Today,” *Teaching in the Northwest* (October 2004).

launches them as ministers of the gospel to make disciples. Greg Ogden describes this model in a four-fold mentoring process: I do, you watch; I do, you help; you do, I help; you do, I watch.⁶ The Bold Love project is shaped with this experiential model in mind. Students will have the opportunity to observe instructors and one another; they will practice new listening skills and have the chance to practice sharing their stories of faith in the classroom followed by the opportunity to practice these same skills in their own spheres of influence and then return to the classroom to process that experience with fellow students and instructors. This relational and experiential pathway of discipleship is the crux of this project; it allows individuals to strengthen their relationship with God, to practice loving others and to have a safe place to process their initial experiences of sharing the Good News.

For the last several decades, the local church has increasingly become a customer service center and a caretaking entity. Our pastors are often so busy preparing sermons or making pastoral calls they are not investing time in making disciples a few at a time as Jesus did. George Hinman, Senior Pastor of UPC, spends four days each week preparing his sermons. The proclamation of the Word and worship services are important, but making disciples who go into all the earth and make disciples is essential. This essential task of the church requires transformation and not simple information.

My own passion for formation and equipping began long ago. It was September 1999. I sat in my first Fuller Seminary class at the Menlo Park campus. Surprised to find myself in seminary at all, the only thing that was more stunning was the question the Holy Spirit placed in my soul that day. A question that has remained in my head and

⁶ Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 82-97.

heart ever since: who is pastoring these pastors? The classroom was brimming with full-time pastors, many who had a decade or more of experience. I, on the other hand, had virtually none. I was a mom and lifetime Presbyterian, determined to get some theological insights so I could speak with at least some measure of integrity at an upcoming women's retreat.

I could not see what God could already see. I was beginning to hear a call upon my heart and life, the call to pastoral ministry. I have served in three churches, most of that time in congregational care roles. Currently, I serve as the Associate Pastor of Congregational Life at UPC. This role was created when two pastors left staff with the two departments - Community Life (small groups and membership) and Congregational Care (Deacon ministry, Stephen Ministry, support groups, financial counselors, grief, loss, death, and dying) - becoming one. This new department of Congregational Life is served by myself along with a staff of seven, including two ordained pastors.

I have served as pastor, mentor, and journey guide for others most of my adult life outside the traditional role of pastor and this has continued in my service within the institutional church. The first church I served, San Ramon Presbyterian Church (SRPC), was a church plant in the affluent suburbs of Northern California with approximately 450 members. As a singer, I helped to lead worship and, upon completing my Master of Divinity at Fuller, SRPC created a pastoral role for me combining my love of worship leading and my skills in pastoral counseling and pastoral care. Following this, I served at First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley (FPCB) serving 1600 members as a Minister of Congregational Care. At FPCB I also had the opportunity to teach high school students, college students, and young adults; the mentoring and discipling theme continued.

Mentoring and equipping seem to be my soul-shape and my pastoral calling. At both SRPC and FPCB I equipped others to fill my role, working myself out of a job by equipping lay-leaders with strengths in the areas of worship and care. Watching others develop their strengths and gifts, learn to share their faith narrative, and grow in their ability to love themselves and therefore begin to love others well – including sharing the Good News –defines equipping. The most life-giving moments of ministry for me are when I see others get freed from old patterns and step into new ways of loving and living with Jesus that allow them to share this love, grace, and hope with others. My call, desire and prayer for those I serve is to see people unbound, untangled and free to love and serve God with the whole of their lives.

The question I first heard in 1999 – who is pastoring the pastors – has been refined. Today I ask whom it is that equips, encourages, and serves pastors, understanding that every member of the Church is a pastor and called to offer the whole of our lives to Jesus and his mission in this world. I am thrilled to join Jesus in his mission.

CHAPTER 1

THE CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

This chapter will discuss the range and scope of current ministries at University Presbyterian Church (UPC). Special attention will be paid to the congregational priorities based on the community's history and placement within the greater Seattle area. It is within the current realities and pressing needs discussed below that the Bold Love project will be introduced and implemented in order to equip, train, and release members of UPC into ministry in all spheres of life.

Socioeconomic Factors in the Seattle Area

University Presbyterian Church is a predominately middle and upper middle class congregation. They are well educated as delineated later in this document. UPC membership draws from twelve counties, 148 ZIP codes and an additional thirty-eight out of state residents who still hold their membership at UPC and consider it their church home.

Seattle is a coastal city and the seat of King County; as of 2014 Seattle had an estimated 668,342 residents and as of July 2014 was considered the fastest growing major

city in the United States.⁷ The metropolitan area of the Puget Sound is the fifteenth largest metropolitan area in the US.⁸ Situated between the Puget Sound and Lake Washington, Seattle is known for its natural beauty; from downtown one can see Mt. Rainier to the South, the Olympic Mountains to the West, and the Cascade Mountain Range to the East. With extensive natural and mineral resources, Seattle grew dramatically 1907 and 1962. Nordstrom, UPS, Boeing, and Eddie Bauer were all founded in Seattle's early years. The next season of rapid growth for Seattle came in the 1980s; Microsoft, Amazon.com, RealNetworks, Nintendo, McCaw Cellular (now AT&T), and VoiceStream (now T-Mobile) are just a few of the tech companies that call Seattle home. Many health care companies are based here; Seattle is also considered the leading the fight in cancer research and is home to Seattle Children's Hospital, University of Washington Medical Center, Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, and Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

Financial Priorities of UPC

As with any church, UPC's financial priorities directly impact ministry. The financial information offered here is offered in order for the reader to glean some insight into the ongoing priorities at UPC and in particular, UPC's identity as a University church which has impacted staffing and program development in regards to adults. Since the Bold Love Initiative is targeted at adults from age 30-70, it is helpful to understand the programming and financial priorities established at UPC.

⁷ Visit Seattle, "Seattle Facts," <http://www.visitseattle.org/press/press-kit/seattle-facts> (accessed June 28, 2015).

⁸ Ibid.

The 2015 UPC financial audit by Clark Nuber, Certified Public Accountants and Consultants provides an overview of UPC's accounting policies and financial priorities. The church has Unrestricted Net Assets (UNA, net assets not subject to donor-imposed stipulations), Temporarily Restricted NET Assets (TRNA, net assets subject to donor-imposed stipulations that will be met either by actions of the church and/or the passage of time) and finally, Permanently Restricted Net Assets (PRNA, net assets subject to donor-imposed stipulations maintained permanently by the church). These are of significance because UPC often receives money from bequests that are permanently restricted assets (PRNA). Therefore, UPC's financial priorities cannot be discerned simply by looking at their balance sheet. As with most churches, UPC's two primary expenses are in the areas of personnel and program. For fiscal year 2015, 54 percent of UPC's budget goes to Staff Expense (salaries, benefits) and 41 percent to Program Expense.

Other anecdotal information can be gleaned by reviewing the prominence of projects and campaigns over the last twelve months. Deeply invested in ministry to college students, UPC recently acquired a large home one block from the main campus. Once renovated, Shasta House will be the new gathering place for college students throughout the week. The total cost is \$1.4 million to purchase the property and an additional \$1.3 million for renovations. In ninety days the UPC community committed the first \$900,000 toward this project. This fast-paced, successful capital campaign is a clear indicator of UPC's commitment as a university church; no other capital campaigns in the last five years have seen such dramatic support.

Relational Connectedness and Sense of Community at UPC

Many things contribute to a sense of community at UPC. As noted, a large number of congregants have been active since their days as college students. There are deep connections within the YMM department, particularly with the senior high school students. Their gathering, called Rock, hosts approximately sixty students representing twelve different high schools. For these students, the church provides a smaller context for community than area high schools which average 600 students per grade level; many find it hard to get very deeply connected at school and several students have shared that UPC gives them a place of identity and safe sailing amid the rough waters of their teenage years.

Several long-standing ministries provide regular connection points for certain demographics at UPC. For twenty years UPC had a singles group, Cornerstone; an average of 400 people came weekly to the gatherings. This community of young adults between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five was a soft landing place for individuals after leaving the structured community that is part of college life. Dozens of new families came out of this community as many found their soul mates within the walls of UPC. Another group of long duration at UPC is Genesis; a Bible study that began in 1958 and continues meeting weekly. Beyond these age and stage groups UPC is a notoriously difficult place to find community. I hear comments regarding this most Sundays; One articulate member said this: “UPC is like a hallway with lots of doors; only the doors are without doorknobs. There are lots of activities and events, but it’s difficult to know how to become part of any of them. It seems like everyone is already connected to others and there’s no way for a new person to join in.”

One of the major challenges UPC faces as a large, regional church is that people have a hard time determining who is new and who has been part of the church for a long time. Making a large church feel smaller and helping people find ways to connect with community is one of the challenges I face in Congregational Life. Another challenge is the physical structure of the sanctuary. UPC has a beautiful, stained glass filled sanctuary built in 1957. Both the other churches I served have been laid out in such a fashion that the congregants can see one another; angled configurations that allow the church to connect across the room. When worshiping at UPC congregants all face the chancel directly; excluding the greeting time, which lasts approximately two minutes, one cannot see who else is in the room gathered for worship.

UPC has a rich history of offering teaching and preaching in practical theology that leads to changed and transformed lives. One leader whose impact was enormous was Bruce Larson. In 1989 Larson Hall, named in his honor was constructed. This multi-purpose room serves as a fellowship hall, gymnasium, worship space, gathering space for The Inn, meetings, receptions, and more. Each Sunday congregants gather for fellowship and food. One way in which UPC shows extreme hospitality and aids in developing community is by serving three meals each Sunday. The money and time invested in maintaining this space is indicative of the necessary understanding that ministry is primarily relational; as Rich Kannwischer of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach says: "Real faith moves at the speed of friendship."⁹ The Bold Love Initiative is designed to assist believers at UPC in developing the capacity to listen well to God and others, to winsomely articulate their own story of faith, and to strengthen their

⁹ "About | St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church," available <http://www.sapres.org/about/> (accessed February 2, 2016).

capacity to show up as faithful friends in the lives of those in their community. Engaging in conversation and seeing the extreme hospitality, as modeled in Larson Hall helps to reinforce the teachings of Bold Love.

From Tall Steeple to Irrelevance: UPC in Modern Context

America has shifted greatly in its view of the Church and practices in Church attendance. Barna Group, a market research firm focused on the intersection of faith and culture, has spent the last thirty-one years studying the religious beliefs and behavior of Americans.¹⁰ Barna reports that though church involvement was once “a cornerstone of American life, U.S. adults today are evenly divided on the importance of attending church.”¹¹ Just under half (49 percent) say it is “somewhat or very important” while the remaining 51 percent say it is “not too important or not at all important.”¹² They also point out that in the coming generations church attendance is likely to continue to plummet. Only two in ten Millennials (those thirty and under) report valuing church attendance and more than one-third of Millennials (35 percent) take an anti-church stance; those over sixty-eight are most likely to view church attendance as very important (40 percent) while Boomers (ages forty-nine to sixty-seven) and Gen Xers (ages thirty to forty-eight) fall somewhere in the middle of these ranges.¹³ Barna researchers have no reason to believe this trend will change dramatically in the coming years.

¹⁰ Barna Group, “About Barna Group,” <https://www.barna.org/about#.VXpD3FzBzGc> (accessed June 23, 2015).

¹¹ Barna Group, “Americans Divided on the Importance of Church,” <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/661-americans-divided-on-the-importance-of-church#.VXpC4VzBzGc> (accessed June 23, 2015).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

The Church in America no longer holds a place of authority; the reasons are manifold. Reggie McNeal puts it this way: “The current church culture in North America is on life support. It is living off the work, money, and energy of previous generations from a previous world order.”¹⁴ He goes on to state that the modern world assaulted God, “shoving him further and further into the corner” while the postmodern world will “demand a new church expression.”¹⁵ By McNeal’s standards, UPC is a relic of the past, stuck in the practices and patterns of the Church of the modern world. The shift can be seen across society in the United States and across the pews at UPC.

Seattle is a particularly un-churched city. Again, Barna’s research is helpful here:

The percent of residents who identify as “no faith” is more than double the national average. The same goes for the proportion of skeptics living in the Seattle-Tacoma area. Skeptics account for 20% of the adult population in this area.

In addition, nearly 3 out of 10 adults living in the Seattle-Tacoma area do not identify as Christian. The national norm for this factor is 3 out of 20 adults, making Seattle-Tacoma residents 1.75 times more likely than average to not identify as Christian. Yet the proportion of Protestant Christians seems untouched by this. With 48% of adults living in the Seattle-Tacoma area identifying as Protestant, this is right on par with the national average. It is among Catholic Christians where the most impact is seen. The proportion of Catholic adults living in this area is barely half the national norm.

Considering the below average proportion of Christians and the above average proportion of skeptics and adults with no faith, it should come as no surprise that of the different faith activities Barna Group assesses, Seattle-Tacoma residents tend to be below average in participation. Specifically, when it comes to church attendance, the proportion of adults living in the Seattle-Tacoma area who are unchurched is 10 percent-points higher than the national average. Forty-one percent of Seattle-Tacoma adults (41%, 13 percent-points above the national average) say they do not read the Bible and are more inclined to believe the Bible does not teach accurate principles.

The demographic and psychographic make-up of practicing Christians living in the Seattle-Tacoma market skews more ethnically white with fewer single parent homes. Practicing Christians in this area are also somewhat more

¹⁴ Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future; Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2003), 1.

¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

likely than average to be registered Independent party voters and less likely to be either registered Republicans or Democrats.¹⁶

UPC is not immune to any of the shifts in society at large or Seattle. Most recently, Mars Hill Church and its founding pastor, Mark Driscoll, have regularly been in the news; this local church's failures (and those of its leader) has impacted the local community's view of the Church. "Driscoll resigned on Oct. 15, after an internal church investigation confirmed charges of domineering and 'sinful' behavior. He had been embroiled in controversy for months, over charges ranging from plagiarism to a dated blog post in which he referred to America as a 'pussified nation.'"¹⁷ It is easy to see that UPC and other churches will have to consider new ways of being the church and doing ministry in order to overcome growing biases and reach today's society.

A University and Regional Church

UPC is both a university and regional church. Established in 1908 the church was the vision of three far-sighted University Park residents. W.W. Beck, N.B. Beck, and Joseph Holmes, members of the First Presbyterian of Seattle selected three lots at the southeast corner of Fifteenth Avenue Northeast and Northeast Forty-seventh Street as a site for a future church. They gathered \$1,250.00 in a matter of months and by the autumn of 1907, just one year after they entered the contract to purchase the property, had paid the entire balance of \$3,650.00. By February 1908 UPC was holding Sunday school and their first worship service had twenty-nine in attendance, the offering was

¹⁶ Barna Group, "Top 10 Seattle-Tacoma," <http://cities.barna.org/top-10-seattle-tacoma/> (accessed June 23, 2015).

¹⁷ Joel Connelly, "What Mark Driscoll Made at Mars Hill Church," <http://blog.seattlepi.com/seattlepolitics/2014/11/20/mars-hill-church-what-pastor-mark-driscoll-made-at-his-mega-church/> (accessed June 27, 2015).

\$1.22.¹⁸ On April 28, 1909, the church installed its first pastor, Reverend Wilfred W. Shaw. Between 1909 and 1961 the church continued to grow rapidly and built several buildings including a chapel in which the University of Washington (UW) students met weekly for Bible study and prayer. Though firmly planted and serving the University Park neighborhood, this early commitment to college students proved to be instrumental to the identity of UPC and continued to shape the whole of the church's life.

By 1961 UPC had 4,000 members. 1962 brought a new, young pastor, Robert Boyd Munger, to the pulpit. Munger served as Senior Pastor from 1962-1969 when he moved on to serve at Fuller Theological Seminary. By this time UPC was no longer a neighborhood church; it had "city-wide influence and city-wide responsibilities."¹⁹ Its make-up was unique for a church of the mid-sixties; UPC had an unusually high number of members, who were single students, university personnel, and retired persons, and there was a strong academic-professional quality to the group; the membership was mobile.²⁰

In the decades that followed UPC would maintain its deep ties to the University; beginning in 1963, UPC sent college students on Deputation during the summer months. These short-term missionaries grew in their faith and their commitment to see the gospel spread throughout the world. By 1979 over 350 deputees had been sent to twenty-eight countries worldwide. The influence of the academic world shaped many things at UPC. Under Munger's leadership UPC adopted the Bethel Series of Adult Bible Study

¹⁸ UPC Historical Society, *Commemorating – Celebrating – Changing, University Presbyterian Church 1908-1983* (Seattle, WA: University Printing Company, 1983), 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

beginning in October 1965; twenty-two teacher trainees committed to take two years of weekly classes, each session two and one-half hours long, plus eight to ten hours of study weekly, before teaching Old Testament and New Testament classes for two years in the congregational phase. The impact was enormous; “Serious study of the sweep of the Bible has changed the life and witness of many in the congregation and Roberta Hestenes moved into a position of responsibility in adult education prior to moving on to teach at Fuller Seminary.”²¹ Dr. Hestenes’ leadership as early as 1967 is just one reflection of UPC’s ability to shift as the culture around it changed; by 1973 UPC had two female elders and Donna DeCou became the first woman from UPC to be ordained as a minister in 1981.

The late 1970s brought a trio of highly influential, well-educated new staff members to UPC; the first, Ray Moore, a graduate of San Francisco Theological Seminary, joined staff as Minister of Youth and remains on pastoral staff today. Stephen Hayner served as head of the Department of College Ministries with a Master of Theological Studies degree from Harvard, a Master in Old Testament Studies from Gordon Conwell, and a Ph.D. candidate in Old Testament at St. Andrews University, Scotland. Finally, Tim Dearborn, who, like Hayner, held a Master in Theological Studies from Harvard, also held a master’s degree in Missiology at Fuller Seminary.²² Hayner is described as doing “remarkable work in making Evangelical Christianity intellectually tenable to the college community.”²³ Two of these three men would go on to influence Christendom in vast measure; Dearborn, who has published six books on spirituality and

²¹ UPC Historical Society, *Commemorating – Celebrating – Changing*, 101.

²² *Ibid.*, 128.

²³ *Ibid.*

mission serves today as the Director of Faith and Development Programs for World Vision International and has taught at Fuller Theological Seminary, Seattle Pacific University, University of Aberdeen (Scotland), and the French Evangelical Seminary in Vaux-Seine, France. Stephen Hayner, who sadly lost his battle with pancreatic cancer early in 2015, went from UPC to serve as President of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, a ministry to university students worldwide, and finally as President of Columbia Theological Seminary. These men and their accomplishments are mentioned in part to point out the theological strength of the UPC staff over the years and also, because each of them maintained close ties with UPC following their departures. Many of the seminarians, interns, and staff members who have joined UPC in the last four decades have come via connections with these influential men of faith.

UPC has had a remarkable series of senior pastors over the last thirty-five years beginning with Bruce Larson. In 1979 UPC was seeking a new senior pastor when author, lecturer, and former head of *Faith At Work*, Bruce Larson, came to the attention of the committee. Many in the church were familiar with Larson and had read his books (*The Emerging Church*, required reading for the Session in the mid-sixties, and *Ask Me to Dance*). His first sermon was memorable in part because it occurred the same day and hour as the eruption of Mt. St. Helens. Like many on his staff team, Larson held multiple degrees: a Bachelor of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Master of Arts degree in psychology from Boston University. A Visiting Fellow at Princeton, Larson had a keen interest in the area of relational theology which he defined as:

a rediscovery of the worth and importance of the individual as over against content, methods, techniques, theories of personality, or 'the group.' When I know I am forgiven from past, present, and future sins for all time, I can quit saving my life now and I can go out and do scary things for people. Life was not

meant to be saved but to be squandered – for the sake of the Kingdom, and for the sake of a few hurting people.²⁴

Described by Rev. Lloyd Ogilvie, former chaplain of the U.S. Senate, as someone who “envisioned a whole new direction for the church and not only proclaimed it, but lived it. [Larson] modeled for others an honest, open life that was based on authenticity.”²⁵ Under Larson’s skilled leadership and relational strength, UPC tripled in size to 4,400 members. His vision for new ministry led Larson to Southern California where he co-pastored The Crystal Cathedral with Robert Schuller in 1990.

Following Larson’s departure UPC was without a senior pastor for eighteen months. Many believe that this block of time prepared the congregation to receive what turned out to be a significantly different type of senior leader and preacher.²⁶ Earl Palmer first served UPC in 1956 as a youth pastor fresh out of Princeton Seminary. He served for eight years before leaving for a six-year stint in Manila and then to First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley where he served as senior pastor for twenty-one years. Three decades after first serving UPC Palmer returned to Seattle to serve in his final years of full-time pastoral ministry from 1991 until 2006 when he left and formed Earl Palmer Ministries.

Palmer, best known for his didactic teaching style and his works as a Pauline scholar and C.S. Lewis expert, had a style vastly different from Larson, a warm and charismatic leader who was known for his intensely personal sermons laced with jokes.

²⁴ UPC Historical Society, *Commemorating – Celebrating – Changing*, 132.

²⁵ John Iwasaki, “Bruce Larson, 1925-2008: Pastor hailed as ‘thinker and visionary’ A beacon at University Presbyterian,” Seattle P-I, (December 17, 2008). Available <http://www.seattlepi.com/local/article/Bruce-Larson-1925-2008-Pastor-hailed-as-1295155.php> (accessed June 23, 2015).

²⁶ Elaine Schumacher, “Homecoming for Earl Palmer, New UPC Pastor first served here 35 years ago,” Seattle Times, (October 5, 1991). <http://community.seattletimes.nwsources.com/archive/?date=19911005&slug=1309181> (accessed June 23, 2015).

Palmer, far more serious and low-key was already a renowned theologian and Bible teacher when he re-entered the UPC scene. Palmer's sermons were famously informative; unafraid to invite the congregation into the nuances of the original languages, Palmer often sounded more like a professor than a pastor in the pulpit. His brilliance was extended, quite literally, over the pulpit to the congregation. After seventeen years, Palmer preached his final sermon on October 19, 2008 and Rev. George Hinman the incoming new senior pastor assisted. Hinman's installation followed on November 23.

George Hinman came to UPC from Bel Air Presbyterian Church where he served as Associate Pastor of Discipleship from 2004-2008 after serving with Campus Crusade for Christ for 15 years. Hinman, whose undergraduate degree is from Brown University, went on to Gordon-Conwell for his Master of Divinity. Each of his prior roles included significant time teaching the Bible. UPC has once again, filled its pulpit with a scholar, not a pastoral preacher. While UPC's staff is full of gifted pastors, UPC needs to re-shape its formation and discipleship structures in order to equip its members as ministers of the Gospel. Bold Love is necessary at UPC as UPC's rich tradition of educating and informing congregants is not effective in today's society. The church in the US is on the decline and yet Jesus still calls us as disciples to reach the lost world. Without transformational opportunities, such as the Bold Love Initiative, UPC will continue to inform those in the pews while leaving them without the opportunity to discern their gifts and call, develop those strengths, and be deployed in the world on mission with Jesus in their everyday lives.

Institutional Memory and Contemporary Context

UPC's institutional memory is long and deeply embedded. As a relative newcomer to staff with fresh perspective, one can easily discern where this institutional memory impedes the church from embracing its current challenges as the contemporary landscape of Seattle, and the church in America continue to rapidly change. While accurately described in its marketing pieces as a regional church, UPC's current senior pastor, Hinman, leans into the models and methods that served him well at Bel Air, which is shaped far more like a neighborhood church. UPC, once a bastion of power and member of the Tall Steeples community (a consortium of pastors from more than a dozen of the largest PCUSA churches nationwide), continues to shrink in size, from over 6,000 members at the pinnacle of Palmer's ministry in the early 1990s to approximately 3,400 members today with an average of 1,100 in worship each week.

During the height of UPC's ministry over the last thirty-five years the church gradually added staff and peaked at 145 full-time staff members (2004) which developed a heavy dependency on staff-led rather than lay-led ministry initiatives and ministry execution. Over the last six years staff has been cut by more than 50 percent. The cuts have led to dismal staff morale as staff members are required to maintain past levels of programming and projects with fewer man hours and staff members. Likewise, UPC's budget has been hit hard by the changing culture and membership decline. UPC holds over \$30 million in buildings and land and their 2014 \$7.1 million budget is down from \$9.3 million in 2013 and provides significant challenges and opportunities alike.

Though pastoral staff members can be heard discussing the necessary shift from being a church based on the attractional model to becoming a church based on the

missional model, most staff as well as the two senior leaders, George Hinman and Tim Snow, still lead from the old perspective. As Alan Hirsch stated recently the church “must reconceive ourselves as God’s primary missional agency for transformation of the world; we must move into a place where people are committed to something larger than self; where newcomers feel welcome right away.”²⁷ The church maintains a shared identity through consumption and patterns of activities such as Sunday school, small groups, and worship. In fact, these classes and small groups actually serve to perpetuate lifestyle enclaves unless they are outward oriented. The country club and lifestyle enclave appeal of the last few decades continues its demise; meeting our contemporary context will require re-thinking all of the ways we do church at UPC; every project and program must be re-thought. This will require more than tactical changes, adaptive changes in leadership and development of a new culture are necessary.²⁸

Kevin Ford, Chief Visionary Officer and Principal with TAG Consulting, helps leaders as they seek to transform their organizations and meet challenges. His insights, based on his work with companies and churches over the last fifteen years concisely describe the cultural challenges UPC currently faces. Ford encourages a culture of engagement including empowering congregation members, helping staff and laity alike to engage and develop their strengths – tapping into how God has uniquely designed each one to serve him. Primary to successfully changing a culture from involvement (consumers) to engagement (missionaries and disciples) is offering people the

²⁷ Alan Hirsch and Kevin Ford, “Shaped by Jesus,” Presentation at the Fellowship Conference, Dallas, TX, August 19, 2014.

²⁸ Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line; Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2002), 116.

opportunity to create something.²⁹ One might describe this simply by stating that pastors and leaders must learn to become ministry midwives. Simply meeting a consumer's demands is not sufficient to satisfying the church's mission of helping people continually grow in Christ and in their spiritual formation.

It is often said in the marketing world that perception is reality. This is also true of UPC. While the numbers on both the membership ledger and the financial statement clearly point to a church in decline, the staff and senior leaders consistently speak of days past when describing the church. This great chasm between perception and reality could certainly cause one to fear the demise of UPC. However, this church loves and serves an amazing God. I believe and am convicted that if UPC can make the shift from our current consumer culture to that of a missional culture the Kingdom of God will grow in Seattle and beyond. Simply put, UPC must move from old perceptions, practices, and programs that are outdated and ineffective to those that engage the current culture in 2015. We must embrace who we are, not whom we perceive ourselves to be, as those called on mission with Jesus.

Old programs and practices must be re-thought in light of the new context in which UPC exists. Once a garrison of teaching and theological conversation in the Northwest, UPC sees itself as an equipping center however, its programs are primarily focused on children and youth, university students, and informational classes for adults. Consumer-focused events and current programming must be replaced; new language and a cultural shift must occur. New models of equipping must take precedence over attractional events. UPC is a tremendous and deeply committed congregation, and Bold Love is one way of inviting stakeholders and leaders to experience the formation of the

²⁹ Hirsch and Ford, "Shaped by Jesus."

Holy Spirit and launch them into their everyday lives as those equipped to share Good News.

Stated Vision and Ministry Goals

UPC's mission statement is to share hope in Jesus Christ. Its vision is to see every member a minister. Further, UPC calls members and regular attenders to a Core Experience: Alive in Christ, alive together, living for the world. Each of these elements is emphasized in the language used by UPC, especially its senior pastor, George Hinman. However, the language is difficult both to articulate and to embody. Finding new ways of articulating our mission and vision in simple terms so that each congregant can clearly state our identity as a church could have enormous impact. We are shaped by the language we use; re-crafting our mission and vision statements could prove invaluable to assisting in the re-shaping of the culture of UPC to becoming an outward focused, missionally-minded church.

Range of Ministries at UPC

Congregational Life (CL), University Ministries (UMin), Youth Mission and Ministry (YMM), and Children and Family Ministry (CFM) comprise the largest ministry departments of UPC. Congregational Life supports UPC's small group ministries serving over 250 adult small groups per year, a dozen support groups, mental health ministry, and all of Caring Ministries (grief, loss, death, dying). College students from five area universities participate in our UMin programs. The Inn draws over 600 students weekly and approximately 480 college students participate in small group Bible study (Core Groups). Programming for university students also includes three mission trips and summer deputation for those interested in participating. YMM runs year long

programming which includes two mission trips for middle school students and three for high school students. Every Wednesday the entire campus of UPC is teeming with laughter, worship music, and the sound of Bible pages turning as our youth groups fill the building. In addition to Godly Play on Sundays, CFM also has mid-week programming for fourth and fifth graders. CFM supports several adult ministries; Designed for Intimacy for couples, MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers), Selah (Bible study for mothers with school-age children) and a dad's group.

Adult Bible study classes are offered such as women's intergenerational fellowship and a mid-week evening Bible study; additional Sunday programming for adults is offered intermittently. These have primarily lecture-based topical classes; over the last six months, UPC has brought in speakers to share on grand-parenting, wrestling with racial reconciliation, and the works of C.S. Lewis. These have been advertised as workshops, but each speaker allowed fewer than fifteen minutes for congregational participation, discussion, or reflection.

It would be easy to get discouraged looking only at the places UPC needs to re-shape and grow in ministry. Two areas of existing ministry at UPC are having Kingdom impact, inviting people to practice living as disciples by serving others in need and inviting people to be on mission with Jesus. As Bold Love is an attempt to equip the congregation to share their faith with others and to love God and themselves well, these two ministries are examples of the formational and engaged presence Bold Love will celebrate and promote.

Side-by-Side is a ministry that comes alongside families with critically ill children. Scores of volunteers, many from outside the UPC family, serve with Side-by-

Side as they minister to families, most of whom are staying just blocks from UPC at the Ronald McDonald House, while their children are undergoing treatment for cancer at Seattle Children's Hospital. Volunteers cook dinner every Monday evening for ninety people. In addition Family Support Volunteers serve in teams of two and offer consistent fun for the children, both sick and their well siblings. These buddies play board games, read stories, take children to the Space Needle or out for a special ice cream treat. The highlight of the ministry year is Side-by-Side Camp when twenty-two families and their children get to spend an entire week at camp. This ministry provides the incarnational love of Jesus to families in very practical ways; we have seen many parents come to faith in Christ because of their experience with Side-by-Side.

Another ministry success at UPC is our Mental Health Advocate, David Zucker. UPC is one of only three churches nationwide that has a full-time mental health expert and advocate on staff. David connects with those on the margins; often these people suffer silently until their bad behavior gets them sent away from a church. David is equipped to serve some of the most vulnerable and invisible people within our congregation, helping them in practical and meaningful ways, connecting them to resources and offering hope in dark times. Story after story is told among our members about David's ministry to them as they care for a family member with severe mental illness. These are two places in which God is most clearly at work at UPC, and Bold Love will join these initiatives as UPC continues to equip the congregation of UPC for faithful mission.

Demographics of the Congregation

As previously mentioned, UPC is a church that serves a highly academic community. The Session serves as a microcosm of our current congregational make-up. Of the thirty-six Ruling Elders twelve have doctoral/terminal degrees, eleven have masters degrees, and the remaining thirteen have bachelors degrees. Three of them are tenured professors at the University of Washington; these are learned and distinguished individuals, many of whom are leaders in their industries and fields of study. There are a surprising number of families that worship together across the generations at UPC; one family that is highly invested in the CFM department has three generations serving in one Sunday School room teaching Godly Play on the first Sunday of each month. Many in the congregation started attending UPC as college students and have returned with their children and grandchildren to worship together. Initially, the target group for the ministry project outlined in this project, Bold Love, was any adult over the age of eighteen, which means there are approximately 2,500 candidates who might participate in the program.³⁰ After offering the Bold Love pilot in 2015 it became clear that a different demographic groups require adapted curriculum, conversation and instruction, and future iterations of Bold Love will focus on more narrowly targeted demographic groups (discussed further in Chapter 5).

Leadership and Decision-Making at UPC

There is a big gap between the reported and actual decision-making processes at UPC. Presbyterian churches are often described as Elder-led; UPC would describe itself

³⁰ See Appendix A for a breakdown of UPC's demographics.

this way. The PCUSA BOO states the following regarding Ruling Elders and their responsibilities:

G-2.0301 Ruling Elder Defined As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share g in discernment of God's Spirit and governance of God's people. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. Ruling elders are so named not because they "lord it over" the congregation (Matt. 20:25), but because they are chosen by the congregation to discern and measure its fidelity to the Word of God, and to strengthen and nurture its faith and life. Ruling elders, together with teaching elders, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline h and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships. When elected by the congregation, they shall serve faithfully as members of the session. When elected as commissioners to higher councils, ruling elders participate and vote with the same authority as teaching elders, and they are eligible for any office.³¹

UPC's Elders vote on many matters, however, they are not prepared to exercise spiritual discernment, nor measure the congregation's fidelity to the word. They are not equipped to be spiritual leaders, nor invited to make leadership decisions in many areas. I was surprised to hear that, on our Elder retreat last Fall, every single Elder in attendance reported that they had never practiced any sort of spiritual rhythm other than reading the Scriptures for quiet time. There is, however, great reason for hope. When invited into *Lectio Divina* and listening prayer on the retreat, the Session entered fully; by the end of the retreat they spoke individually and then agreed corporately that their own ability to listen to and yield to the Spirit and develop new spiritual formation practices were essential to their service as Elders and as followers of Jesus. The continued invitation of UPC's elders and leadership into deeper faith, formed lives, and missional living is an exciting prospect.

³¹ *Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order 2013*, 73.

One challenge facing the author is that UPC is mostly unaware of the need for ongoing formation by new (and ancient) methods. There has been progress since I joined the staff team; approximately six months prior to this project's initiation, my position was redesigned as the Associate Pastor of Equipping and Congregational Care. The ongoing formation and equipping of all church leaders including Elders and Deacons is now in the scope of this position, along with working in partnership with all departments to discern where and how their lay leaders and staff members need to be equipped for ministry. Leadership training, discipleship, empowering leaders to articulate their own stories of faith and discerning and developing their gifts for ministry within and outside the church walls are now pastoral priorities at UPC. This significant shift is very encouraging and though the task at hand is enormous, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the ongoing support of the pastoral staff members, and strategically designed learning opportunities, progress will be made across all platforms at UPC.

The time is right to introduce the Bold Love project at UPC. There is greater collaboration and trust among the staff than in the past few years, we meet more frequently, play together, and pray together; these shared experiences are trust-building and also provide greater insights into the gifts and strengths of those with whom we serve. Changing the staff culture is essential if we are to re-shape the church culture; this is a *kairos* moment for UPC.

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Bold Love is not simply a strategy to fix current inadequacies in UPC's teaching strategies. Instead, Bold Love is shaped by conversation with experts in the fields of psychology and theology to form a well-rounded experience for the students. This chapter includes overviews and evaluations of five primary resources integral to the shape and theological foundation for loving self and loving God utilized in the development of Bold Love. The contribution of each work to the design of the project will be examined.

Life of the Beloved; Spiritual Living in a Secular World by Henri Nouwen

Nouwen uses direct, insightful, and accessible language in his classic text; the book, written at the request of a non-Christian friend, is Nouwen's heart-felt expression of the Christian life. Henri's friend requested that Henri "speak from that place in your heart where you are most yourself. Speak directly, simply, lovingly, gently, and without

any apologies...Trust your own heart.”³² This honesty brings out the best Nouwen has to offer.

Nouwen understands the believer’s need to see themselves as the Beloved Child of God and his approach is unique. The Bold Love Initiative is focused on guiding the students to 1. discover their own belovedness and 2. learn to extend the love of God to their neighbor. As stated, one must come to understand themselves as beloved in order to receive and then pour out the love of God and love their neighbor as themselves. Nouwen takes a unique approach beginning with the concept that Jesus’ primary view of himself was as God’s beloved child based on the Spirit’s proclamation at Jesus’ baptism. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16-17).

This profound, yet simple to understand text provides the groundwork for the journey ahead of each student; each of us must cease from striving to earn God’s love to simply enjoying what God has already accomplished for us in his son. Like Jesus we are taken, blessed, broken, and given for the world.³³ Nouwen’s material is far from the typical theological text; his gentle voice invites the reader to consider the practical ways in which God loves them and how that love might be visible to the world in which we live. Nouwen’s own journey and discovery of his belovedness provides a lens through which the reader might discover their own belovedness. Understanding oneself as blessed

³² Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved; Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1992) 25.

³³ Ibid., 51, 67, 85, 105.

and precious, just as Jesus identified himself primarily as God's beloved, is essential to spiritual formation and trust in God's love. Nouwen writes that "we have to affirm each other. Without affirmation, it is hard to live well. To give someone a blessing is the most significant affirmation we can offer."³⁴ It is Nouwen's position that hearing and claiming our own blessedness and belovedness is essential to our walk with one another and with God and his text provides the critical foundation for the Bold Love Initiative.

Nouwen also invites readers to consider their brokenness and what can be learned from it; this gentle invitation is integral to the Bold Love experience wherein students are encouraged to truly face the whole of who they are as God's beloved children, brokenness and all. Nouwen's words state simply: "The first step to healing is not a step away from the pain, but a step toward it."³⁵ This is one place in which Nouwen's text is limited for the purposes of the Bold Love initiative. While he challenges the reader to step toward the pain, (as with Psalm 71:20's words in *The Message*, "stare trouble in the face") he offers no pathway or tools to empower the reader to move ahead. Finally, Nouwen offers an essential perspective regarding a healed and holistic life: it is meant to be poured out for others. Thoroughly theological and intensely personal, Nouwen calls each one to live fully. Living as Jesus' called out people means living "not simply for our own sakes, but so all that we live finds its final significance in its being lived for others."³⁶ Nouwen moves his readers from contemplation and love into loving action; this is the overarching goal of the Bold Love project.

³⁴ Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*, 68.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

While Nouwen tells his own story of faith and its impact, he neglects to invite the reader to interact with their own faith story. Additionally, while Nouwen points to his own appreciation of God's ongoing presence and work in his life, he does not offer any practical steps for the reader to take in order to become more aware of God's presence throughout the day. Even with these limitations, there is a great deal of application for the Bold Love project in Nouwen's writing as his gentle voice invites the reader to listen for God's gentle voice.

To be Told: God Invites You to Coauthor Your Future by Dan B. Allender

A major goal of the Bold Love Initiative is to assist each student in understanding and articulating the story of God at work in their life. In order to tell our story of faith, we must embrace it in its entirety. Allender invites people to listen to and reflect on the stories of their life, understanding its sorrows and joys. Embracing the whole of one's faith story is essential to integrating a holistic view of God and self. Allender, whose expertise is in both psychology and theology, offers a well-thought out approach to naming, reading, writing, and multiplying one's story.³⁷

Looking back is essential to moving ahead in freedom and Allender's text is a safe guide for first-time travelers on the journey of healing. "We can love our past – even the parts we avoid and regret – only if we understand that our story is written for the benefit of others' stories in the future."³⁸ Allender asserts "the future is meant to be written in light of the patterns of the past"³⁹ and skillfully invites the reader to take the

³⁷ Dan B. Allender, *To be Told: God Invites You to Coauthor Your Future* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2005), Table of Contents.

³⁸ Ibid., 111.

³⁹ Ibid., 92.

risk of examining their past in its entirety, all the grief and grace their life has held. Our lives reveal things not only about ourselves, but about God, as well. Knowing where and how we have allowed God or others to name, bless, or shame us is essential to integrating the whole of our heart and soul. Allender's text walks the reader through the story process with precise directions and gentle prodding, calling the reader to look deeply and risk exposing the pain of their past to the Gentle Healer himself. It is when we embrace the whole of our messy lives, Allender says, and discover God's grace present throughout the past and present for each moment of this day and the future that we live poured out and create space for others to be healed, too.⁴⁰

Allender calls readers to move through life with attention (to the Holy Spirit at work) and intention (to partner with God). Developing the capacity to articulate one's story of faith is central to Bold Love; being a disciple means seeing, understanding, and articulating God's faithfulness throughout our life's journey. As people learn to look at their life through this new lens - the consolation and desolation of their story (as with the Prayer of Examen) - new practices can be developed and new spiritual habits formed. One of the best tools Allender provides is the imagery of dots⁴¹ and connecting the dots as the reader considers the story of their life. They are encouraged to develop skills of discovering and reading the patterns of their own life.

Allender defines and clearly explains the need to be fluent in storytelling, as well as aiding and guiding the reader through the steps of understanding and embracing the hope and the pain of their story. Further, he encourages the reader to consider God's ongoing activity and actions in their life and faith story. These are useful tools for a

⁴⁰ Allender, *To be Told*, 6.

⁴¹ Ibid., 94.

student in the Bold Love Initiative as the Initiative seeks to provide students a safe place to consider the whole of their life and God's activity throughout it. He offers succinct question that assist the reader in taking logical and linear steps in the storytelling process in simple and helpful fashion.

While Allender comments a bit about community and the power of allowing others to serve as editors as one writes their life story⁴², there is too little consideration for the power of community. Allender focuses a great deal on the character of God as revealed through the character of the individual and spends a great deal of time considering dreams and dream fulfillment. This is unhelpful to the narrower focus of the Bold Love project.

To be Told is an excellent resource for the Bold Love initiative. As an expert with his own story of deep pain, Allender's ability to interweave the worlds of psychology and theology as it pertains to story, offers a helpful foundation. The text is only one step in a long healing journey and is most helpful when read and processed in community.

The Gifts of Imperfection by Brené Brown

In *The Gifts of Imperfection*, Brené Brown, a shame researcher from the University of Houston, invites readers to a new kind of courage. Her work is reminiscent of Psalm 71 as she invites her reader to stare down the trouble in their life, discover their power to overcome and move beyond it to cultivate a wholehearted life.⁴³ Bold Love students are challenged throughout the course to consider patterns in their lives; their spiritual, thought, and emotional lives. Brown challenges readers to consider their

⁴² Allender, *To be Told*, 130.

⁴³ Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection; Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 2010), x.

patterns, break them and move into emotional and personal freedom. Like Allender, she invites the reader to consider their life story: “owning our story and loving ourselves through the process is the bravest thing that we will ever do.”⁴⁴

As a researcher Brown had observed patterns and as she states, “once you see a pattern, you can’t un-see it.”⁴⁵ As she studied the stories of people who had gone through very hard things and still lived fully, with delight and joy, she was determined to pinpoint the skill, knowledge, and choices that allowed this kind of wholehearted living.⁴⁶ The foundation of her book is this: “How much we know and understand ourselves is critically important, but there is something that is even more essential to living a Wholehearted life: loving ourselves.”⁴⁷ This is reminiscent of Jesus’ words and core to the Bold Love project.

Brown utilizes the language of cultivation throughout her book encouraging readers to cultivate things such as authenticity, self-compassion, a resilient spirit, gratitude and joy. While not an explicitly Christian book, Brown is a woman of faith which is evident in her writing. Unafraid to tackle hard subjects, Brown offers stories that connect with the reader, as well as practices as homework for growth. She invites readers to consider places in their life where they have lived in fear. There is an invitation to face the fear directly, call it out and with the help of others be freed from said fear; again, this reflects David’s words in Psalm 71. In short, Brown invites readers to discover their own

⁴⁴ Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, ix.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., x.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

wholehearted life. Her writing has been beneficial in my life and serves as an essential tool in the toolbox for the Bold Love project.

Unique from other texts utilized in the Bold Love Initiative, Brown's book tackles subjects not covered by the other authors the students will read; she considers such things as perfectionism, negative self-talk, and self-compassion not covered in the Christian books. Her goal of understanding how others not only survived, but thrived through extremely painful circumstances led her to ask questions that, while not inherently theological, still point to hope, spiritual renewal, and grace for oneself and others.

The author found Brown's text both accessible and gentle. Further, her no nonsense approach allows the readers to consider their own habits and patterns with courage. The author of the Bold Love Initiative found the book personally helpful and effective when used in other classes she has taught.

While Brown's text is very readable and a good tool for the class, it is limited in part because she does not write anything about God or the power of Christian faith in her text. There are hints about faith and she comments about spirituality as it pertained to the results of her survey work. While she comments on many themes that have biblical foundations including letting go of anxiety as a lifestyle, letting go of the need for certainty, letting go of scarcity and fear, she does not connect these themes to the God of the scriptures. Alternately, she offers effective practices for skill development and invites the reader to create new habits that have been effective for her test subjects as well as for her personally. It is this very personal approach that has deep impact on those who read her book.

Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve by Lewis Smedes

The institutional church has often participated in shaming people, when its intent was to call them to confession and contrition. Like Brown, Smedes also considers the realities of shame and grace. While shame keeps individuals bound to their past, God's grace invites all to leave their shame and their guilt at the cross. Core to the Bold Love Initiative is the goal of helping each students discover God's abundant love for them and his view of them as fully forgiven in Christ.

While Brown is writing to the general population, Smedes takes a distinctly theological approach combined with the best of psychology. Smedes addresses the heaviness of shame, the varieties and sources of shame, and then moves on to discuss grace and the healing of shame. His last chapters on the "Lightness of Grace" invite the reader to come to terms with their shamers and accept themselves and God's immense gift of grace.⁴⁸ From the very outset Smedes reminds the reader that "shame is not necessarily a bad thing to feel...it can get us in touch with the most beautiful part of ourselves or be a warning that we are becoming the kind of person we do not really want to be."⁴⁹ Shame, he states, is "a primal feeling, the kind that seeps into and discolors all our others feelings, primarily about ourselves but about almost everyone and everything else in our life as well."⁵⁰

Smedes shares the same viewpoint as Nouwen that our experience of being accepted (by God and others) is the beginning of our healing. Learning to embrace our

⁴⁸ Lewis Smedes, *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 135.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Preface.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

own belovedness and then love others fully requires that we consider the most painful events of our lives and allow them to be re-framed by God's love, healing, and grace. It was through this and other Smedes writing that the author of the Bold Love Initiative discovered the immense weight of shame she had been living under. Smedes likewise offered some of the first moments of freedom as this trusted voice encourages readers to understand that they are not the shame they may feel: "Grace overcomes shame, not by uncovering an overlooked cache of excellence in ourselves but simply by accepting us, the whole of us, with no regard to our beauty or our ugliness, our virtue or our vices. We are accepted wholesale. Accepted with no possibility of being rejected. Accepted once and forever."⁵¹ Smedes addresses not only the shame we encounter from our false self, which has no basis in reality, but also the spiritual shame we encounter as we experience life with our broken brothers and sisters in the church.⁵² He helps the reader to consider things such as transference and projection offering insights anyone outside the field of psychology will find consumable. Smedes discusses social shame and frames this lesson with the story of Jesus from the Gospel of John; "he came to his own home and his own people received him not" (John 1:11).

In addressing our sources of shame – our families of origin, the church, and ourselves – Smedes encourages the reader to look closely at their shame and then invites the reader to experience relief by way of spiritual healing. "The healing of our shame begins best, I am convinced, with a spiritual experience – to be more specific, a spiritual

⁵¹ Smedes, *Shame and Grace*, 109.

⁵² Ibid., 126.

experience of grace.”⁵³ This call into grace is essential to living as a healed and whole follower of Jesus; “we are accepted wholesale. Accepted with no possibility of being rejected. Accepted once and accepted forever.”⁵⁴ This kind of self-acceptance and integration of God’s grace into the soul is foundational to learning to love others; we can offer grace to others only to the extent that we have received it. This book is an invaluable tool in equipping the saints in our Bold Love project.

While Smedes mentions God working through others, he does not fully address the value of community and its impact on the life of those on the healing path. Unlike many of the other authors the Bold Love students will read, Smedes addresses grace as both a healing gift and a lifestyle. He calls the reader to go beyond receiving grace, but also to generously share the grace they have received stating, “Grace graciously given honors our worth as it overlooks our undeserving.”⁵⁵ His description of grace is profound and leaves the reader with the image that the road to peace with both God and self is paved with grace. This imagery will be of great benefit to the Bold Love participants.

The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God by Dallas Willard

While Willard’s writing is clear and direct it can be hard to read. However, the text is foundational for developing the Bold Love Initiative as it calls the reader to move from the idea of following Jesus into actually following Jesus. “More than any other single thing, in any case, the practical irrelevance of actual obedience to Christ accounts for the weakened effect of Christianity in the world today, with its increasing tendency to

⁵³ Smedes, *Shame and Grace*, 105.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 109.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 120.

emphasize political and social action as the primary way to serve God.”⁵⁶ Willard calls the reader to live the whole of their life in submission to Jesus and his will.

Called to move beyond sin management into full-time discipleship, Willard challenges his reader in a way unique from any of the other sources for the Initiative. Using the scriptures as his foundation, Willard points readers on the Jesus way. He points out that “the aim of the popular teacher in Jesus’ time was not to impart information, but to make a significant change in the lives of the hearers.”⁵⁷ Bold Love comes from the desire to move the church beyond information gathering to changed hearts and lives; Willard lays out a pathway to follow. He states: “We have received an invitation. We are invited to make a pilgrimage – into the heart and life of God.”⁵⁸

Founded solidly in the scriptures, Willard’s text describes life in the Kingdom of God and the shape of discipleship. He calls for the whole of one’s life to be submitted to Jesus’ lordship, including work, rest, play, and finances. He continues with a clear definition of and instructions for being a disciple:

The effect of continuous study under Jesus would naturally be that we learn how to do everything we do “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17); that is, on his behalf or in his place; that is, once again, as if he himself were doing it. And of course that means we would learn “to conform to everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). In his presence our inner life will be transformed, and we will become the kind of people for whom his course of action is the natural (and supernatural) course of action.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Dallas Willard, *Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998), xiv.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 112.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 273.

“Given clarity about the condition of soul that leads to choosing discipleship, what are practical steps we can take to bring strongly before us the joyous vision of the kingdom?”⁶⁰ The Bold Love project is meant to clarify the condition of the soul and assist the disciples of Jesus at UPC in submitting the entirety of their life to Jesus rule and reign.

Unlike the other texts primary to the foundation of Bold Love, *The Divine Conspiracy* has a direct call to both discipleship as a lifestyle and ongoing formation and training as a method of practice. Willard writes:

The primary objectives of any successful course of training for ‘life on the rock,’ the life that hears and does, are twofold. The first is to bring apprentices to the point where they dearly love and constantly delight in that ‘heavenly Father’ made real to earth in Jesus and are quite certain that there is no ‘catch,’ no limit, to the goodness of his intentions or to his power to carry them out. The second primary objective of a curriculum for Christlikeness is to remove our automatic responses against the kingdom of God, to free the apprentices of domination, of ‘enslavement’ (John 8:34; Rom. 6:6), to their old habitual patterns of thought, feeling, and action.⁶¹

The ongoing practices Willard references will be taught and practiced, both in class and at home as homework, by Bold Love participants. It was through Willard’s challenge that the author of this Initiative began to consider the value of spiritual practices and caused her to pursue spiritual disciplines including those taught in the Bold Love classes. They have proven invaluable in the ongoing formation of the author’s soul and instrumental in re-shaping her thoughts and words into more Christlikeness.

Willard calls every Christian to turn the whole of their mind and the entirety of their very lives toward God. This is deeply connected to hope of the Bold Love project: lives dependent upon God’s love and grace, fully submitted to Jesus’ love and reign in

⁶⁰ Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 295.

⁶¹ Ibid., 321.

their individual lives; living fully alive, glorifying God and enjoying him forever. Due to the length of the book, students will not be asked to read *The Divine Conspiracy*, however, Willard's work, particularly as it addresses core discipleship practices, will be useful to those teaching Bold Love.

Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Bonhoeffer, the scholar, Christian, and theologian who would ultimately lose his life as a martyr, is described as “a teacher of the Church in the highest sense of the word, a writer of profound theological and Biblical insight and yet close to contemporary life and sensitive to reality, a witness who saw the way of discipleship and walked it to the end.”⁶² Bonhoeffer's small and remarkable work *Life Together* has lessons in both discipleship and life in community that are helpful for the students in Bold Love. Bonhoeffer demands that Christians set aside their selfish ways and participate in community as God designed; “The man [sic] who fashions a visionary ideal of community demands that it be realized by God, by others, and by himself. He enters the community of Christians with his demands, sets up his own law, and judges the brethren and God Himself accordingly.”⁶³ Bonhoeffer's call to follow Jesus and the Spirit's guidance when dealing with other Christians is instructive; “Contrary to all my own opinions and convictions, Jesus Christ will tell me what love toward the brethren really is.”⁶⁴ His writing covers topics such as confession of sins to another believer, the ministries of listening, serving, and authority which are not found so explicitly covered in any of the other resources the author is utilizing. Unique in its approach, *Life Together*

⁶² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), 13.

⁶³ Ibid., 27.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 35.

looks at the challenges of relationships both within and outside of the church, and challenges the reader to consider how God's love, and life might be applied in each situation. In so doing, it provides a challenging practice for those wanting to invest fully in becoming transformed to be more like Christ. Bonhoeffer, unlike other authors, challenges the reader to consider that the ongoing strife in relationships is fundamental to their spiritual formation. Bonhoeffer's text encouraged the author to consider the imperfections of those around her as a blessing, rather than a challenge and an invitation to extend grace upon grace to each one she meets. It is, like any text, limited in its usefulness for the Bold Love initiative. Bonhoeffer does not ask the Christian to move beyond their community with their acts of service and kindness; moving out of Christian community, including the Church, is part of the call of Jesus upon the life of all believers.

The work of these writers helped shape the Bold Love Initiative. Each of them influenced the author and challenged her to consider the various ways in which souls are transformed by love, grace, truth, and freedom. Key learnings from them about storytelling, shame courage, and love can be found woven into the Initiative, to aid adult learners to discover their identity as God's beloved children, develop spiritual practices that continue to shape and form them as disciples, and leave the class prepared to share their story of faith. The spiritual formation goals of Bold Love can be described as developing both internal strength and outward focus and each book contributes to this goal. Brown, Smedes, and Allender anchored firmly in the field of psychology, and spiritual guides Willard and Nouwen create a chorus of voices calling students to continue on pilgrimage with Jesus facing their fears and discovering his love and life.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGY OF FORMATION AND HEALING

The key theological theme of Bold Love is that as we discover our own belovedness we live in freedom extending the love and grace of Jesus Christ to all those we meet. “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.” (Galatians 5:1) and as followers of Christ we are called to sanctified lives; we no longer live as slaves to sin or the past but instead live as transformed individuals. This process of sanctification requires that we are renewed in our minds (Romans 12:2); how we think and what we believe impacts our attitudes, words, and actions. We are called to be transformed, not just informed. As we embrace God’s love and grace we repent from performing and instead live freely in God’s loving embrace as his beloved children. Experiencing this love and grace has a direct impact not only on how we view ourselves, but necessarily how we view others. People who are forgiven and healed are free to forgive and extend grace to others. As Paul admonishes the Galatians in 5:13-17, this freedom leads us to love our neighbor. As freedom and love continue to shape our hearts and renew our minds we continually tell the story of God’s grace and healing to others and the good news of the Gospel is shared.

What follows are the scriptural and theological framework and foundations for the Bold Love Initiative. Grounded solidly in the Word, this initiative also incorporates

practices that help the students to develop and deepen their attention to the Holy Spirit. The ongoing transformation of our souls and our capacity for sharing hope with others is impacted by our ability to practice paying attention to the presence of the Trinity moment by moment in our lives. The spiritual disciplines practiced by saints throughout the ages offer the groundwork for this ongoing formation and Bold Love participants will have the opportunity to practice them throughout the course. While practice does not make perfect, it does develop permanent habits. Spiritual transformation guides such as Benedict and Ruth Haley Barton all contribute to expanding the student's holistic spiritual development.

Ultimately, the Bold Love Initiative is an attempt to prepare the saints at UPC to live out the Great Commission. The underlying theological and scriptural foundations all rest on the call of the Church to live as those joining Jesus in his mission to reach a lost world. As ministers in the pews discover God's love, discover their own gifts as empowered ministers of the gospel, reflecting Ephesians 4:11-12, and learn to embrace and tell the story of God at work in their lives they live as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers loving and serving God and their neighbors.

Every Member a Minister: Transformation over Information

UPC's vision statement is: Every Member a Minister. My own experience of being called from the pews into ministry as a middle-aged adult has served to reinforce my belief that every member of the Church can serve as a minister. In order to serve in ministry, each member must be transformed into the likeness of Christ. As scripture reminds us, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds" (Romans 12:2). This is the call on the life of every follower of Jesus.

Likewise, Christ is formed in us not just personally, but communally as the called out people of God. Macrina Wiederkehr says “We do not always realize what a radical suggestions it is for us to read to be formed and transformed rather than to gather information. We are information seekers. We love to cover territory.”⁶⁵

There are, of course, many reasons behind the movements of religious and spiritual renewal in the United States. Rationalism, which has permeated culture since the Enlightenment, makes reason the highest authority. While providing great progress in many areas of life, including the healing sciences, rationalism has pushed God from the center of human thought to the sidelines. Technological advances have also led to innumerable changes in Western society. Transportation, invention, medicine, marketing, and communication have all been significantly impacted as changes rapidly occur. Thompson notes that these changes have resulted “both in tremendous benefit and enormous social dislocation.”⁶⁶ Social media inventions such as Facebook and Instagram lull users into believing they are more connected as they scroll through photos and stories of other’s lives. In reality, however, while humans today may experience more connection, our relationships have less depth, stability, and dimension. Finally, as our society continues to develop at a rapid rate, our society experiences more fear, with cause to worry about the widening gap between the rich and the poor and the social impact of crime, drugs, and gang violence throughout the United States. While these fears can cause a longing for a stabilizing faith, they also lead to self-determination, attempting to create safety with conventional, rather than faith-filled, means. UPC is not immune to any of these challenges.

⁶⁵ Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast* (Minneapolis: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 18.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

In addition to these cultural forces, UPC faces a unique challenge as a university church filled with academics. With so many professors, students, and visiting scholars in the pews, UPC has a tendency to offer information-based classes. While congregants leave these events well informed on topics such as peace in the Middle East and justice in the Seattle area, they do not necessarily leave formed to be more like Christ. Ted Thwing is a researcher and an Elder at UPC. His project on spiritual growth shows a direct correlation between spiritual growth and personally challenging times in life. While there are other significant factors in the individual's formative process, including trusting God, listening to God, and supportive community, he found no correlation between gathering information about God and spiritual growth and formation.⁶⁷ This environment of gathering information as a collection of data to inform, rather than inviting formation and offering God the space to reshape one's soul, has kept many of the congregants at UPC informed but not transformed.⁶⁸

In order to share the good news of Jesus Christ, one must be able to articulate the story of Jesus as revealed in the scriptures as well as the story of Jesus revealed in one's own life experience. The Gospels are filled with stories of those healed and changed by Christ who go out to their villages and towns and the story of how Jesus healed them. As they tell these stories others turn to God and lives are changed. We find this in Luke after Jesus heals the blind beggar. "Jesus said to him. 'Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.' Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God" (Luke 18:42-43). Likewise, in John 14 after encountering Jesus, his words, and his transformative power, the Samaritan woman

⁶⁷ Ted Thwing, *So You Want to Grow Spiritually*, unpublished manuscript, 5.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

shares her story and “many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony” (John 14:39). When Jesus and his transformative healing and power are encountered, lives are changed and the stories these healed individuals share have impact and often create change in the lives of others. People no longer simply speak of themselves or the information they have collected; instead, they speak of the soul-altering, life-giving Lord of Lords. It is clear that if UPC desires to have every member live as a minister of the gospel, a new approach to spiritual formation is required. The term minister means those equipped for ministry as missionary, pastor, teacher, evangelist, apostle, and prophet. Halter states simply: we are called to equip God’s people, not do the work for them.⁶⁹

Bold Love has several components that invite students to transformation. Beginning with the very first week of class, students practice spiritual journaling and in later weeks practice the Prayer of Examen. These written reflections help the students to gather and review their own spiritual noticing and practices throughout the day and the weeks between Bold Love classes. As they observe their own spiritual patterns they can be both invited and challenged to make changes. Contemplatives from the past and the present have influenced the author of the initiative; these writers offer insights and practical application of the spiritual disciplines. It is from these disciplines that the author draws and creates spiritual practices for Bold Love participants’ use as they seek and practice transformation. From Saint Benedict (*The Rule of Benedict*) to Marjorie Thompson (*Soul Feast*) to Ruth Haley Barton (*Sacred Rhythms*) the writings of these individuals offer insight into a faith that grows daily and a soul that is transformed and reshaped moment by moment.

⁶⁹ Hugh Halter, *Flesh* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2014), 128.

Week three finds students engaging with Psalm 139; here they discover the God we cannot outrun, the God who see us. No matter where we go, “even in the depths” of Sheol, the Psalter states, God is there (Psalm 139:8). This is the overwhelming story of the Bible. As pastor and preacher Richard Dahlstrom reminded the author recently, “God is love and grace and always for us, he is infinite love and grace. We are changed when we believe this.”⁷⁰ When we believe we are God’s beloved we go from hiding, like Adam in the Garden (Genesis 3:8), to pausing and allowing God to embrace us. The students will be asked to consider where God has shown up in the storms of life in the past, and what old messages they still believe such as about the trustworthiness of God or the worthiness of their own self. They will be challenged to investigate which lies or assigned identities from their Family of Origin they have agreed to and continue to believe. Authors Allender, Smedes, and Nouwen in particular have helpful questions to consider and exercises to practice as students are invited to see God and themselves in a new light. Indeed, mercy triumphs over judgment and, by God’s grace, freedom is possible.

The Unbound Unbind Others

Those we see in the Gospels who are healed and freed by Jesus cannot help but share their story with others. One’s gratitude for the love, grace, and healing of God is meant to be shared. Gratitude leads to joy; joy overflows and the story of God’s faithfulness is recounted. Over the years, the author of *Bold Love* has asked adults at each of the churches she served if they have ever shared their story of hope; the story of how God has been at work in their lives. The vast majority reported they had never share

⁷⁰ Richard Dahlstrom, “Better Bodies are Grace Fed,” Sermon delivered at Bethany Community Church on January 10, 2016.

their story with another.⁷¹ Noting the deficit of people's experience in sharing their story, the author has included several exercises to allow students the opportunity to rehearse their stories and practice serving as active listeners when others recount their stories, as well. During Week 4 of class the students will participate in *Lectio Divina* based on John 8, the woman caught in adultery. After this exercise students will be asked to consider Jesus' forgiveness of their own sins and reflective questions such as: where has sin kept you on your knees? When did Jesus come and call you forgiven? How did that impacted your view of others and their sin?

Week 5 provides exercises that take Bold Love participants through acceptance of their own story, even the painful places. Writers Brown and Allender will be of significant help here as they challenge readers to be brutally honest about even the most painful parts of their past. Learning to embrace the whole of one's story, including places they have sinned or been sinned against and working through that pain, can be immensely freeing. The students will continue to work in dyads and triads, practicing active listening and serving as witnesses to one another's stories. Instructors experienced as skilled listeners will circulate through the classroom in order to maintain an emotionally safe environment for all. As David says in Psalm facing and embracing the truth leads to freedom. This work allows Bold Love participants to practice serving as the incarnational presence of Christ with one another; a skill desperately needed in this hurting world.

The initial framework for the theology of formation and healing is God's Word. This project previously considered Jesus' call to: "Love the Lord your God with all your

⁷¹ This was simply a common question asked by the author throughout her ministry career, not specifically researched and quantified. It is included as because she queried hundreds of adults over the years, thus offering a large sample size.

heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matt 22:37-39). There are other passages undergirding the theology and practices in the Bold Love Initiative such as John 11:1-44, the story of Lazarus. There are many moving passages within the pericope; perhaps most significant to the Bold Love program are the love of the community, Jesus’ capacity to bring life from death, and the command to the community to unbind this resurrected man.

Beginning at verse 32 we can see the love Mary and Jesus both have for Lazarus. “When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ‘Where have you laid him?’ he asked. ‘Come and see, Lord,’ they replied. Jesus wept” (John 11:32-35). Jesus not only experiences grief with Mary over Lazarus’ death, his compassion was on display.

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. “Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face, (John 11:35-44).

Throughout this segment we see Jesus not only acting with authority, but commanding the community to participate in Lazarus’ freedom. Jesus commands them to move the stone though this dead man will stink, Jesus chooses to bring him to life in order to glorify God. So too today, only Jesus can breathe life into empty, broken, dying

humanity. It is his life-giving breath that resurrects. When humans turn to him, God is glorified.

For the author of this project the most impactful phrase in the whole of the story is Jesus' final command to the community. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go" (John 11:44). Jesus, the life-giving Savior has just brought Lazarus from death to life, surely he could have removed the grave clothes with just a word. He makes a different choice; Jesus calls the community to be part of Lazarus' renewed life, to unbind this man so that he can live in freedom. There is an immense lesson here: only Jesus brings life from death and he calls others to unbind those he has resurrected. This perspective is core to the Bold Love initiative: part of disciple making is helping to unbind those who come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Community is required for spiritual freedom, formation, and growth and is clearly seen here in John's gospel.

Followers of Jesus are the sent ones, sometimes to mission fields far away, sometimes to soccer fields at the end of the street. Halter reminds that God sent prophets, an olive branch, and finally Jesus to earth.⁷² So too, today, God sends parents to sit next to others on the bleachers during kid's athletics practices and games, to the hallways in schools, those who sit nearby at a coffee shop or corner pub. The mission field is wherever we are. We are a sent people.⁷³

Like Lazarus' friends, we are also sent in community, called to walk humbly among friends and learn to see their humanity as God does, and then unbind them. Hugh Halter describes the difference between being religious and "whimsically holy:" "Religious people shoot for perfect holiness and call others to perfect holiness, and thus,

⁷² Halter, *Flesh*, 36.

⁷³ Ibid., 72-73.

judgment, comparison, and condemnation from a dense fog that blinds people from seeing God. A whimsically holy person can inspire people out of their mess without any judgment. They woo people through their intriguing character, and they charm people through their nonreligious ways.”⁷⁴ Whimsically holy, intriguing and charming, is who we are called to be.

The power of embracing and articulating one’s own story of faith, exhibited by David in Psalm 71, is a final scriptural formulation critical to Bold Love. This text is raw, full of anger, honesty, and courage. Peterson’s *The Message* is most helpful for the purposes of Bold Love.

These opening verses affirm the Psalmist’s need for God; running for dear life to God and God makes space for him. It is evident the Psalter has experience with God: ‘Do what you do so well: get me out of this mess and up on my feet’ (Psalm 71:1-3). The writer has called upon God and found God able in the past. Here we see the writer’s confidence in God.

As the passage continues, verses 4-16 show the danger surrounding the writer and his plea for God’s assistance. In the final third of the Psalm, the writer recalls God’s faithfulness throughout his own life; it is as though he is reminding himself of God’s strength, power, and capacity to save him.

While the entirety of the Psalm underscores the need to know God and God’s character and capacity; it is in this final segment the Bold Love project finds a solid foundation. Beginning in verse 17 the Psalmist states that God has known him throughout his life. Further, the Psalmist comments on God’s strength and presence throughout his life. It is as though by speaking of who God has been and how God has acted the Psalmist

⁷⁴ Halter, *Flesh*, 87.

finds courage to face his troubles of the moment. For this author the most significant lines of the Psalm are these:

You, who made me stare trouble in the face, turn me around;
Now let me look life in the face.
I've been to the bottom; Bring me up, streaming with honors;
turn to me, be tender to me,
And I'll take up the lute and thank you to the tune of your faithfulness, God.
I'll make music for you on a harp, Holy One of Israel.
When I open up in song to you, I let out lungsful of praise, my rescued life a song.
(Psalm 71:20-23)

As stated at the outset of this project, a main objective of the Bold Love initiative is to help God's people learn to articulate their own story of faith and God's presence along their pathway, whether rough or smooth. "Staring trouble in the face" (Psalm 71:20) is an excellent description of the process students in the Bold Love class experience. Learning to tell one's own story means to look intently at the whole of the story, even the darkest, most painful parts. This is best done in a safe, trusting environment.

However, the work does not stop there. The point to discovering and embracing stories of faith is that they might be used as part of healing for others; each individual story is, of course, a part of God's bigger story. Allender states "stories are food for friends to feast on together."⁷⁵ It is through perseverance with relentless openness (again, staring "trouble in the face") that one can begin to be free from the pain and wounds of the past and move into forgiveness and freedom. Like Lazarus, grave clothes will be loosened; as they are unwound so too one is unbound and free to move into life in Christ.

⁷⁵ Allender, *To Be Told*, 146.

Practice Makes Permanent: The Importance of Practicing Spiritual Disciplines

Voices beyond scripture also provide theological grounding for the Bold Love initiative. These formative figures and followers of God provide insight, and practical helpful guidance for our journey. The subtitle of Ruth Haley Barton's book *Sacred Rhythms* is *Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*; this could also be the subtitle of the Bold Love initiative. The book begins with a reminder to pay attention to our longings. "Life in and around the Christian community does little to help us attend to our longings, to believe that deep within there is something essential that needs to be listening to, or to offer much hope that our deepest longings could take us somewhere good."⁷⁶ This is a helpful reminder for the Bold Love initiative, founded on the understanding of our own story and our own identity as Christ's beloved child. In addition, it is when we learn to pay attention to the Spirit within us that we can also be attentive to how the Spirit is moving around us and in our relationships.

According to Marjorie Thompson in *Soul Feast*, disciplines help us shed "familiar but constricting old self and allow our new self in Christ to be formed."⁷⁷ This is the goal of the Bold Love initiative. Barton calls for quiet, rest, and solitude. She encourages the pilgrim to stay anchored in the scriptures and extended silence with God. She considers the holistic being honoring the body, the mind, the soul, and the heart.⁷⁸ She challenges readers to practice self-examination and learn to discern, and ultimately encourages each pilgrim to practice Sabbath. Each of these practices is part of the Bold Love initiative

⁷⁶ Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 10.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

(outlined below). As noted in the evaluation section, the author has added a half-day silent retreat to the Bold Love curriculum. The value of practicing attentiveness to the Holy Spirit cannot be overstated.

The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius were recorded as early as 1541 and were intended by Ignatius to be “solid working tool for those who wished to enter into the serious work of their salvation.”⁷⁹ The principle and foundation of the Ignatian Exercises are these: “Man [*sic*] is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. All other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him fulfill the end for which he is created. From this it follows that man is to use these things to the extent that they will help him to attain his end. Likewise, he must rid himself of them in so far as they prevent him from attaining it.”⁸⁰

The heart of all spiritual disciplines, from Barton to Ignatius to those practiced in Bold Love, could best be defined by Irenaeus: the glory of God is a human fully alive.⁸¹ To be alive includes being alive to one’s own identity in God, to the work of God in one’s life moment by moment and to the work of God in surrounding community and world. Discovering spiritual disciplines, spending more time with God listening to the Spirit and engaging the longings of one’s own soul contribute in powerful ways to ongoing life transformation. Barton states that in self-examination “the real issue is not that I am inviting God to know me (since he already does) but that I am inviting God to help me know me. This is clearly the bigger challenge anyway, since we all have such

⁷⁹ Saint Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (New York, NY, Random House, 1964), 33.

⁸⁰ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 47.

⁸¹ Irenaeus of Lyon, quoted in Patrick Reardon, “The Man Alive,” available <http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=25-05-003-e> (accessed December 12, 2015).

finely tuned tactics for protecting ourselves from knowing what we don't want to know.”⁸² This deeper, divine knowing comes only by spending time with God and with one's own soul; learning to listen to God's word and one's life as they each speak.

Theology of the Called Out Ones

Jesus' first command to love the Lord our God is followed by the command to love our neighbor as ourselves. His final command, known as The Great Commission' is “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Followers of Christ are called to share the good news with the lost world; the command was given to the church, not the professionals in the pulpit. The disciples were commanded to go out; they were not told to go to seminary or take Sunday school classes or memorize the Stations of the Cross, but simply to go. And so the disciples went out and simply shared their own stories of Jesus; who he was, how he lived, and his impact on their lives. The call upon UPC and the Church universal is the same. Following the Great Commission, part of the goal of Bold Love is to empower congregants to share their own stories of faith and of Jesus at work in their lives as part of a people called out and sent by God.

The church in America continues to decline. Pastor and author Hugh Halter estimates that while in 1980 only 20 percent of America was un-churched, by 2020, 94 to 96 percent of America will be un-churched.⁸³ Called to make disciples, it seems ministry programs and previous approaches are no longer working. This presents a whole new missional context. The Church in America must find new ways of being the church and reaching the culture.

⁸² Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 94.

⁸³ Hugh Halter, Presentation at UPC, Seattle, WA, October 24, 2015.

Author and missional leader Alan Hirsch notes that over the last sixty years the church and Christianity “has become a matter of private preference rather than that of public truth.”⁸⁴ Roxburgh, another thought leader in missional church leadership, says “the congregation has ceased to be a gathering of a covenant community. Modernity has transformed it into a voluntary association of free individuals who join out of need and stay out of personal choice as long as needs are met.”⁸⁵ An entire cultural shift must take place if the church is to become a missional people moving out of the pews and into neighborhoods and communities as ambassadors of good news.

However, culture change within the church is not easy. Roxburgh and co-author Fred Romanuk suggest “culture change happens in a congregation when God’s people shift their attention to elements such as listening to Scripture; dialoguing with one another; learning to listen; and becoming aware of and understanding what is happening in their neighborhood, community, and the places of their everyday lives.”⁸⁶ We must learn to “see the church in, with, and among the people and places where we live, rather than in a specific building with certain kind of people.”⁸⁷ However, all of the skills listed above are skills not often taught in churches today, including UPC. Bold Love attempts to offer such equipping of the saints.

Roxburgh and Romanuk state that formation of individual souls invites transformation of the Body with both being necessary.⁸⁸ Hirsch calls on church

⁸⁴ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Ada, MI: Brazos, 2009), 108.

⁸⁵ Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 169.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

leadership to build “an apostolic, charismatically empowered, ministering community based on Ephesians 4:11-12.”⁸⁹ These empowered ministers must know their spiritual gifts and strengths, have the capacity to winsomely share their story of faith and act with love and compassion to every person they meet. Hirsch breaks down the gifts and skills of leadership by the titles used in Ephesians 4:7:

Apostle (those who extend Christianity, establish or found churches or ministries, develop leaders, and look through a strategic missional lens).

Prophet (the person who has an ear toward God and acts as the mouth of God, discerns and communicates God’s will, and questions the status quo).

Evangelist: the recruiter and communicator of the gospel message who makes clear the offer of salvation so that people might hear and respond in faith.

Pastor: cares for and develops the people of God by leading, nurturing, and discipling them and cultivates a loving and spiritually mature network of relationships and community. One who makes disciples.

Teacher: one who clarifies the revealed mind/will of God so that the people of God gain wisdom and understanding and practices discernment, guidance while helping the faith community to explore and understand the mind of God.⁹⁰

While Hirsch takes the position that each follower of Jesus has all of these leadership skills to some degree, he suggests most have one or two that are their core strengths.⁹¹

Both the scriptures and Jesus make it clear that reaching the lost world on behalf of the Kingdom is every believer’s responsibility. Clearly, finding new ways to equip people to be sent out as missionaries in their everyday contexts is necessary in today’s un-churched environment. The primary purpose for helping individuals articulate their story of faith and develop confidence in doing so is to enable individual’s to engage in

⁸⁸ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 34.

⁸⁹ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 171.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, v.

dialogue and discuss their story in ways that connect their memory to the biblical narrative and bringing voice to their experiences, located within God's narrative, in order to share that with others.⁹² Roxburgh and Romanuk say it succinctly "Missional leadership is about cultivating the capacity and gifts of the people who are already part of the church and shaping cultural imagination within a congregation" so that "people discern what God might be about among them and in their community."⁹³

Therefore, the final theological foundation for the Bold Love initiative is connected to relationships. Designed in the image of God, humans are designed for relationship. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit function in perfect harmony, but humans do not. As those called to go and make disciples, followers of Jesus must have the capacity to develop meaningful relationships. Johannes Pederson says "life consists in the constant meeting of souls, which must share their contents with each other. The blessed gives to the others, because the strength instinctively pours from him and up around him...The characteristic of blessing is to multiply."⁹⁴ Eugene Peterson, in *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, writes "the character of our work (as Christians) is shaped not by accomplishments or possessions but in the birth of relationships."⁹⁵ In order to share the good news of the gospel with others we must be involved in meaningful relationships with neighbors, co-workers, and fellow students.

⁹² Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 69.

⁹³ Ibid., 30, 26.

⁹⁴ Johannes Pederson, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 182-199.

⁹⁵ Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2000), 110.

Robert Ricciardelli says it this way “The currency of the Kingdom is relationship and the currency of relationship is conversation. The quality of the conversation directly influences the quality of our relationship. Sharing of hearts is transformational, beginning with God and extending to others. People near you want to engage in conversation with you, and a conversation that flows well both ways as it harvests relationship that reveals God’s glory.”⁹⁶ Bold Love provides for the development of this set of skills needed to faithfully expand relational capacity and equipping members of UPC for meaningful, fruitful relationships in which they might communicate the love, grace, and good news of Jesus.

⁹⁶ Robert Ricciardelli, “The Currency of the Kingdom is Relationship,” available <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/robertriciardelli/ricciardelli/the-currency-of-the-kingdom-is-relationship-by-robert-ricciardelli/> (accessed January 7, 2016).

PART THREE

EQUIPPING SAINTS FOR BOLD LOVE

CHAPTER 4

THE BOLD LOVE PLAN

Bold Love is a ten-week course that will offer students the opportunity to discover their identity as God's beloved child, grow in their understanding and ability to tell the story of God at work in their life, and grow in gratitude and freedom as they reflect on God's power and love at work in their healing. The class requires students to fully commit; including signing a covenant at the outset of the course; this ensures that students understand the investment of time, not only in the classroom, but also time spent in prayer, reflection, journaling, and other exercises they will be asked to complete at home. Attendance at every class is requested though there will be some absenteeism due to illness and other unforeseen life events; the covenant is meant to assist students in committing to their own growth and development in very significant ways. There is also a clause regarding confidentiality within the covenant; trusting one's fellow classmates is core to the Bold Love experience. The first year pastoral staff will primarily teach; it is the long-term goal to have lay leaders using their gifts of teaching to lead the Bold Love project.

The ultimate goal and value of this initiative is that UPC would become a church filled with saints who have integrated and holistic faith, are emotionally mature and spiritually formed and can articulate their own faith journey to anyone who asks. The evidence of success will be determined not by church growth, nor by statistics. Rather, as congregants continue to be transformed into Christ-likeness and therefore, practice daily loving God with their whole being and their neighbors as themselves, the fruit of the Spirit of God will flourish and the Good News of the Gospel will be shared throughout Seattle and to the very ends of the earth. Bold Love is incarnational love. Proclamation has run its course, the church in 2015 and beyond must embrace the truth and Jesus' way of discipleship; incarnation. As Hugh Halter says in *Flesh* "the incarnational way of life is not about conversion. It's about adoption."⁹⁷ We must prepare our church members to live as called out missionaries equipped spiritually, emotionally, and relationally to serve as incarnational missionaries in their neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces.

UPC expresses this vision: Every member a minister. Bold Love is an attempt to equip and empower each member of UPC to live as ministers, those who share the Good News and love of Jesus wherever they go. There are practical ways to equip people for the lives God is calling them to live. The author's first practical equipping experience came when teaching Stephen Ministry classes at FPCB. Stephen Ministry is a 1:1 caring relationship; Stephen Ministers are trained, skilled listeners. It is their call and privilege to listen to others, ask good questions, and serve as the non-judgmental presence of the Spirit to their Care Receiver. It was in teaching these classes that one could see how effective it is to equip others with practical skills, utilizing the best from the worlds of

⁹⁷ Halter, *Flesh*, 37.

theology and psychology. Most remarkable, was that those trained as skilled listeners all reported opportunities to share their faith with others because they had listened well and come alongside them with compassion. Beyond their Care Receivers, these Stephen Ministers were living as incarnational witnesses of the love, grace, and compassion of Jesus to their families, in their workplaces, on the soccer fields, and in their college classrooms; everywhere they went.

Because not everyone is willing or able to commit an entire academic year to this kind of training, new types of training must be offered and extended to the whole of the congregation, from teenagers and college students to older adults. In response to this need, new classes were formed and pilot programs developed; Life Skills was developed for high school students and Soul Train(ing) for young adults and college students. Each of these efforts was filled with both success and failure. While not part of the initial Bold Love Project, they came in response to staff members desire to equip the congregants they serve. The success of these classes, measured by the responses of the students, the learning they gleaned and their statements regarding the impact on their daily lives and relationships, and their increased confidence as servants of Jesus, encouraged the formation and direction of Bold Love. The author continually learned while teaching and modifying the course for each community and age group.

Returning the work of God to the people of God is essential; beyond the biblical mandate to do so, we must acknowledge the reality of the challenges we face as the Church in 2015. Barna and other researchers believe, and the author agrees, that in the

years to come the institutional church must re-think its staff-heavy structure.⁹⁸ UPC has cut its staff by more than 50 percent in the last six years and cut the budget by one million dollars in the last five months. Beyond these structural realities there is this truth: no matter how big or gifted a church staff, the congregants have the capacity to reach people staff members will never meet. God's plan for discipleship and extending the good news to the ends of the earth requires that we equip the saints in our pews to live as ministers of the gospel in their everyday lives; a theology of missional living is imperative. Their personal growth is also imperative; disciples have the opportunity to experience deep joy when partnering with the Holy Spirit in reaching others for Christ; paid pastors and staff must not keep this privilege to themselves as professionals in the pulpit.

Throughout the ten-week course students will have the opportunity to read experts on formation, as well as, emotional growth and healing. Beyond the reading and course lectures, students will work together weekly in dyads and triads practicing the listening skills they are learning. Each week's lesson plan includes a variety of teaching styles, so that every kind of learner in the classroom has access to growth and discovery. Finally, at the end of the course each student will have the chance to tell his or her own story of faith one-on-one.

Clearly, this project is of great personal significance to the author. It is also deeply connected to the fruit seen throughout the last five years in ministry. Longing for others

⁹⁸ Barna Group, "Americans Divided on the Importance of Church. (March 14, 2014). Barna research Institute data https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/661-americans-divided-on-the-importance-of-church#.VXD_SK1Viko (accessed January 28, 2016).

to experience the freedom found Christ and discovering the joys of incarnational living is the hope of Bold Love.

Obstacles and Opportunities of Discipleship and Bold Love

UPC needs a new approach to discipleship or, perhaps, an ancient approach shaped to meet our current society and context. Disciples of Jesus are those who follow Jesus in heart, mind, soul, and action; they love God and love their neighbor as themselves. Jesus and Paul followed similar models of disciple making: both were relational models of equipping and launching others into ministry. Ogden points out that among churches there seems to be an unwillingness to call people to discipleship: “Christian leaders seem to be reluctant to restate the terms of discipleship that Jesus laid out. What are the reasons for our reluctance? We are afraid that if we ask too much, people will stop coming to our churches.”⁹⁹

One must understand discipleship and be a disciple practicing ongoing formation to in order to make disciples. Discipleship and formation are distinct yet similar and connected. The ongoing transformation of each one’s heart and mind is essential for following Jesus; becoming more like him in our thoughts and heart leads us to actions that are more like his. Transformation is part of discipleship and therefore leads us to acting as Jesus did; we are bearers of his good news and invite others to come and see and then follow Jesus as Lord. All of this stems out of relationship with God and with others.

⁹⁹ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2003), 49.

UPC has continually set a low bar for discipleship. As mentioned earlier, there are informational classes, but not formational (soul transforming, practice inducing) classes offered at UPC. There are two primary obstacles to increasing discipleship opportunities that the Bold Love project must face: first, institutional memory is long and deep and old ways of learning are familiar and preferred and, second, reshaping staff roles to make space for equipping staff and lay leaders.

Though there is little to no conversation within the congregation regarding spiritual formation, it has been the author's experience that when asked directly about their spiritual walk, capacity as disciples, and developing the ability to love God more deeply and love their neighbors as themselves, individual congregants, staff, and lay leaders alike have all expressed the desire to grow. While they may not be familiar with spiritual disciplines or practices, each one with whom the author has spoken expressed interest in developing spiritually, but did not understand exactly how to go about this. When queried, people often commented about becoming more biblically literate which is, of course, part of discipleship however, not one person the author engaged in conversation around this, including the entire Session of 36 Elders, had experience with formative habits or practices beyond daily devotions, Bible based learning such as Bible Study Fellowship (BSF), and attending church on Sundays.

It was out of these conversations that the author became encouraged that the Bold Love project would be of great benefit to UPC, there also seemed to be a hunger for such a program. At the close of each conversation the author would ask: if there was something offered that would help you in formation and spiritual practices, something beyond Bible study, would you be interested? The answer was a resounding: YES!

It is the author's opinion that if 15 percent of the entire congregation participated in the Bold Love project over the next five years, a significant shift could happen within the UPC culture. This cultural shift including language, values, methods, and programs would then become a new model of developing disciples and preparing God's people to join him in mission. A significant factor in this approach will be the influence and participation of the leaders, both lay and staff, in stepping into the new culture.

Ogden points out that the pastor's first priority is their own ongoing spiritual formation and following on the heels of this, the pastor must invest deeply in just two or three other individuals. Be a disciple; make a disciple.¹⁰⁰ Each UPC staff member has the capacity to serve as a catalyst for developing such pastors (on staff and in the pews). While they have capacity to serve as catalysts, by and large, they are without time or expertise to develop the laypeople they serve. This lack of capacity to actually train and equip laity is why the author's position was redesigned to include equipping laity and leaders church-wide.

The Weekly Curriculum of Bold Love

The opportunities for Bold Love are endless. The primary learning goals are for students to discover and begin to integrate their identity as God's beloved children, to grow in their understanding of God's presence in the story of their lives, and to learn to share their own story of faith. Bold Love, outlined week by week below, is intended to meet individuals wherever they are in their walk with God and equip them with new practices and habits in their pilgrimage of faith. One of the primary advantages of this program is that it can be re-shaped for different learners; those new in the faith and

¹⁰⁰ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 135.

those who have long been in relationship with Jesus can all benefit from it. The onramp to formation is a gentle one and also allows for those of deep faith to continue to grow; While the full syllabus can be found in Appendix B, what follows is a brief overview of each the ten weeks.

Week 1: Beloved

There are several priorities for the first class meeting. Students will introduce themselves to one another, learn a bit about the instructor and participate in several ice-breaking (and teacher-informing) exercises. The students begin the journey with Henri Nouwen's *Life of the Beloved*. The additional experiences of the first week include: guidelines, expectations, covenant, and confidentiality. We will consider our identity as it relates to our lives in the horizontal, vertical, internal, and external realms. An introduction to and exercise in spiritual journaling will be offered. Students will work in dyads telling a story of a memorable celebration. Barriers and invitations to living into belovedness will be considered. Homework includes reading Nouwen and spiritual journaling for a minimum of five minutes daily.

Week 2: Blessed

Students will begin by sharing, in a written paragraph, about their experience of journaling. The core of this week's experience is to consider how each student has been blessed; they will consider their soul-shape (including spiritual disciplines from their past experience) as well as any spiritual gifts they or others have observed in their life. This week marks the initial foray into empathetic listening skills that students will work on weekly in class. Verbal and non-verbal communication will be considered and students will begin a review of the qualities of effectively listening to and caring for others and

will consider their own spiritual and emotional maturity. Students will practice empathetic listening skills in class working in triads. Gaining skills in empathetic listening, asking open-ended questions, being attentive to the body language of the speaker, as well as their words, and serving as a non-judgmental presence to the speaker will increase their capacity to listen well to their neighbors, family members, and friends. These skills, which they will hone weekly in Bold Love, are essential to building trusting relationships and will directly impact their effectiveness as witnesses of Jesus' love and presence. They will learn to observe and evaluate other students in the triad. The listening exercise is based on this: share about a person who has had a positive impact on your life. Beginning with this second week students spend approximately one-third of each class time in triads or dyads. This allows them the opportunity to hone their listening skills and invites them to participate in a way that simply listening to an instructor cannot accomplish. Homework will include practicing the Prayer of Examen for a minimum of ten minutes per day and reading and completing the *Strengthsfinder 2.0* book and online indicator.

Week 3: Broken

This third week will focus on brokenness, sin and God's immense grace. A portion of Psalm 139 will be used as the text for *Lectio Divina*; students will report in triads their experience with this spiritual discipline. Psalm 139 provides a powerful foundation for understanding how God views us and during listening exercises students will practice open-ended questions in their triads, continuing to evaluate others. The concept of self-deception will be introduced as well as an initial discussion of the Family of Origin (FOO), which has immense impact on one's view of their own value to God

and others. The ways in which faces have been masked and false selves created to present to others will be discussed. This is a delicate topic and must be handled with the utmost care. It is the author's opinion that inviting a Marriage and Family Therapist to be a part of this class would be beneficial. Additionally, after teaching the pilot, the author discovered that she must be certain students have access to pastoral and clinical counseling throughout the duration of the class. UPC has a generous fund available for any congregant who needs, but cannot afford counseling; it will be helpful here.

Students will report on their top five strengths as discovered in the *Strengthsfinder* assessment. Each will have a one on one appointment with the instructor later during the week to dig deeper into the results of the indicator. The author finds the Strengthsfinder (SF) indicator more useful than other indicators because it does not limit anyone to only a small number of roles/strengths. Having used it in the past with adults, teens, and college students, the author has found it to be very helpful as the strengths articulated are at the same time broad and focused. It provides insights into practical and vocational strengths while also providing insights that can be applied to the areas of spiritual gifts and stewardship of skills.

Transference will be explained and students will begin to consider the impact of their reactions and motivations and, working in dyads, students will consider whether they respond primarily from shame, guilt or fear. How this affects current relationships and family of origin will be considered. Homework will include reading and meditating on Luke 4:1-13 (Jesus tested in the wilderness) and preparing responses to questions about seductions, temptations, and idols.

Week 4: Being/Belonging

Students will read *The Gifts of Imperfection* by Brené Brown and her TED Talk (The Power of Vulnerability) will be shown. Strengthsfinder results will be discussed in groups of four, including conversation on what was most surprising and what in their results they most identify with. They will discuss discovering one's unique soul-shape and gifts in relation to others. Students will work in triads discussing someone (including a stranger) who is difficult for them to care about and discuss how they might intentionally try to see the other as Christ sees them. Unconscious bias, including unexamined bigotry against other ethnicities will be discussed. *Lectio Divina* based on John 8:1-11 (the woman caught in adultery) will be the spiritual practice offered and students, after reflecting back to the whole group, will work again in dyads considering their own sense of belonging to Jesus and community. Homework includes journaling about two five-minute conversations with key relationships (work, family, friends) in which they practice asking open-ended questions.

Week 5: Bestowed

The spiritual practice this week, guided spiritual journaling, is focused on reflection of a time in the wilderness and one's capacity to be still and seek God in the storms of life. Students will work in dyads after watching a segment of the movie *Freedom Writers*. They will discuss areas in their own journey of faith that have caused them to fear sharing their story of faith with another (for instance, they believe they are a novice or have too little Bible knowledge or fear rejection by the other when they bring up faith). Students will be asked to consider their own levels and practices of acceptance and compassion in their everyday lives and how those have impacted their faith journey.

The YouTube video by Soul Pancake, “The Science of Happiness – An Experiment in Gratitude,” will be shown and discussed.¹⁰¹ Students will meet in dyads a second time and discuss moments and experiences in their lives when they have been a blessing to others. Homework includes composing a letter of gratitude to someone who has made a positive impact in their life; they will then be asked to call the person and read them the letter. Following this, students are asked to write a two-paragraph reflection on their experience and come prepared to share it next week.

Week 6: Welcome to the Priesthood

Students come to class after reading the remainder of Brown and share their experience writing and reading their letter of gratitude. This week’s focus is on incarnational psychology; showing up as Jesus in the room with others. The spiritual practice will be focused on discernment or finding God in all things. Students will be led through the Prayer of Examen and asked to write a reflection on their discoveries with another. The class will be focused on stories from scripture wherein we see Jesus moved by compassion to touch, heal, and listen to others including the text from Mark 5 (Jairus’ daughter and the woman with the blood issue). Students will again meet in dyads to discuss their reflection from their homework and their current understanding of themselves as Ministers of the Gospel and Priests in God’s Kingdom. Homework includes reading *Listening For the Soul: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction* by Jean Stairs (pages 15-36), practicing contemplative (listening) prayer for ten minutes daily and journaling daily for a minimum of ten minutes. Students are to reflect on and rate

¹⁰¹ “The Science of Happiness – An Experiment in Gratitude,” available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHv6vTKD6lg> (accessed January 11, 2014).

themselves on their belovedness factor each day and upon the factors that enhance or hinder their ability to experience God's love.

Week 7: Listening to the Holy Spirit

This week's focus is on listening with the third ear, or what Nouwen calls "the ear of the heart."¹⁰² Students will practice reading the scriptures for relationship; praying as Samuel did: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:9). As Dietrich Bonhoeffer states: "prayer is not a matter of pouring out the human heart once and for all in need or joy, but of an unbroken, constant learning, accepting, and impressing upon the mind of God's will in Jesus Christ."¹⁰³ The topic of mediating the holy and how compassion and co-suffering can soften and even alleviate the suffering of others will be discussed. Incarnational psychology, including the work of Richard Peace, will be discussed. Following this, students will meet in dyads and reflect on their belovedness factor exercise from the previous week. Each student will listen for the movement of the Holy Spirit as their dyad partner speaks and reflect back places wherein they notice the Spirit's presence, or perhaps, absence. This observation of consolation and desolation in another's life is the basis for spiritual direction and soul-shaping work for both the speaker and the listener. Homework includes contemplative prayer practiced ten minutes daily and a written paragraph to share next week about any changes in the student's awareness of God's presence in their daily life.

¹⁰² Henri Nouwen, *The Essential Henri Nouwen* (Boston, MA, Shambhala Press, 2009), 30.

¹⁰³ Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 49.

Week 8: Feelings and Shame, Forgiveness, and Grace

Grace is central to the Reformed Faith of UPC. While most students have some understanding of grace, accepting grace for oneself is a stumbling point for many Christians, even those who have professed faith for a lifetime. Delving into the nature of feelings, the burden of shame, and the freedom of grace is essential to living a life of freedom in Christ. A boundaries inventory will be taken in class; students will then meet in dyads to discuss their findings. In addition, students will consider places in their own lives and their families of origin wherein there are unhealthy patterns of co-dependent, passive aggressive or binary thinking. Using a portion of Isaiah 30:15 - “this is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength” - students will reflect and write on places in their own life stories wherein they were disquieted by their own patterns of emotional unhealth or the impact of other’s unhealthy behaviors on them. After time journaling, students break into triads to share their learnings and hear other’s discoveries. Homework includes reading two articles on boundaries and spiritual journaling for a minimum of ten minutes daily. Students will prayerfully review the list of people in the class. For each one, they will note how they have witnessed the individual change and grow on a spiritual and relational level. Students will prepare affirmation cards describing the way they see Christ in the other or noting some significant, positive change for each person in the class.

Forgiveness will also be discussed during this class. Many Christians misunderstand Christ’s call to forgive and believe instead, that they are called to forgive and forget; worse yet, the church often demands that people forgive without giving them

the space and opportunity to move with intention from anger to forgiveness. By rushing people through their process and requiring them to forgive too quickly, we ignore the pain and wounding individuals carry and in so doing, work against the very thing God calls each of us to: an integrated life of faith and love. Studies show that children who lose a parent go on to live full, healthy, normal adult lives if just one adult will validate their pain and loss and provide them a safe place in which to process this loss.¹⁰⁴ These young people go on to live integrated lives and move to forgiveness at an appropriate time. The same study showed that children with no place to process with grief and anger at losing their parent but rather, stuffed their feelings, faced lives wracked by such difficulties as joblessness, addiction, and lack of healthy relationships.¹⁰⁵ It is clear that while we are called to forgive as God has forgiven us, we must move toward forgiveness at a pace our soul can tolerate and our heart can integrate into the whole of our life story.

Week 9: Assertiveness, Boundaries, and Co-dependence

To a large extent, freedom in Christ comes only with understanding our own nature and habits and the gifts and brokenness of those around us. As Bonhoeffer states “Human love constructs its own image of the other person, of what he is and what he should become. It takes the life of the other person into its own hands...[whereas] spiritual love recognizes the true image of the other person which he has received from Jesus Christ.”¹⁰⁶ Students will practice Ignatian Contemplation based on the First

¹⁰⁴ Jackie Ellis, Chris Dowrick, and Mari Lloyd-Williams. “The Long Term Impact of Early Parental Death,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* (February 2013), <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3569022/> (accessed December 28, 2015).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 49.

Contemplation in The Spiritual Exercises. This contemplation is on the Incarnation and contains a preparatory prayer and three preludes. The first, to recall the history of the subject to be contemplated, the second using the imagination to envision the location of the story and to place oneself within the story, and the third, to watch what unfolds in the drama and ask for what is desired.¹⁰⁷ This exercise will aid students in employing their holy imagination, a practice left mostly unrehearsed and unexplored in their Reformed Tradition.

The primary subject of this class will be digging deeper into the family of origin and relationship patterns established therein. The writings of Peace, Allender, and Palmer will serve as foundations for the discussion, guiding the student to look at and listen to the story of their lives and consider how God has been present to them on the journey. In addition, they ask their readers succinct, insightful questions. Because each of them has a particular voice in their writing utilizing them all, rather than just one or two, allows for a broader spectrum of learner to connect with the writings. As students discover their own limitations with boundaries and areas of co-dependence they can then be addressed. Homework includes practicing Ignatian Contemplation (moving through several scriptural stories) and capturing their insights daily in their journals. Indirect communication styles will be considered including co-dependency, passive-aggressive patterns, and re-visiting binary thinking. Gospel stories with examples of boundaries, including stories of Jesus' own capacity as boundary-setter will be discussed. Finally,

¹⁰⁷ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 69.

students will read articles on writing out a story of faith and bring to class three short phrases capturing experiences that are integral to their own faith story.

Week 10: Telling our Stories of Faith

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). Three instructors will each share their stories of faith with the entire class. Class discussion will follow searching for common themes in stories told and within scripture. Students will then have time to write and work on their own stories of faith in the classroom. In Acts 1:8 Jesus says, “You will be my witnesses.” The responsibility to share a personal story of faith, not just the stories offered in scripture, must be taken seriously. Shaped in God’s image, humans are designed for relationship just as the Father, Son, and Spirit are in continual relationship. The Rule of Saint Benedict demonstrates the immense value of hospitality and community. Articulating one’s own stories of pain and grace allows an invitation for others to discover their own life and God’s presence in it. As Richard Peace states, “all manner of objects – fire, water, sun, mountain, moon – have the potential to stir up grace. But primarily it is other people through whom we encounter grace and experience hope.”¹⁰⁸

Each week’s class is intended to develop the student’s identity as God’s beloved child. The spiritual exercises combined with the lectures and in-class work in dyads and triads are designed to allow students to process each of the topics. As students understand and embrace the story of their lives and learn to articulate them, they discover God’s ongoing presence and their own healing journey can continue. The preferred future of

¹⁰⁸ Richard Peace, *Noticing God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 76.

saints equipped to tell their faith story to anyone who asks can become a reality. In addition, as individuals do emotional healing work in the areas such as boundaries and conflict, while at the same time, discover and practice spiritual exercises, they grow holistically. This project integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning. Students have the opportunity to learn from the scriptures, the fields of psychology and theology. The evidence of this formation will be the flourishing of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Launching The Bold Love Pilot

The pilot project was launched in February 2015 with classes running for ten weeks. As previously mentioned, UPC staff initially tried to dissuade the author from offering a class of such a long duration, however the author forged ahead. The class size was limited to thirty students and it can be reported that the class was full plus a waiting list of eleven.

The theological research was completed in the fall of 2014 and resources were identified and developed. The author determined which texts to include in the curriculum and while offering students a variety of voices and writing styles discovered that limiting the reading was an important component of shaping the class. The author realized that just as students need to gain insights by reading a variety of different experts, minimizing homework assignments was crucial. Maintaining the balance between active learning, which leads to transformation, and relying on old models of teaching within the church proved to be a bigger challenge than the author anticipated. While students generally appreciated the variety of teaching methods including video, music, spiritual disciplines practiced in class and working in dyads and triads, some found these quite challenging and commented several times how much harder these were than coming just to hear lectures. However, on the final night of the class every student commented on their surprise at their own capacity for growth and that being stretched outside of their comfort zone by telling their story, listening to others weekly, and attempting and practicing new spiritual disciplines had enriched their lives.

The mission statement was formed: **Bold Love will help shape disciples.** Covering both spiritual formation and emotional growth and healing; the intersection of these two will be addressed within an environment of honesty, trust, and safety and assist in

developing courage in the hearts and souls of the participants. Bold Love will offer students the opportunity to discover their identity as God's beloved child, grow in their understanding and ability to tell the story of God at work in their life, and grow in gratitude and freedom as they reflect on God's power and love at work in their healing.

The Bold Love initiative's outcomes may be difficult to measure except through personal interaction. One might be able to measure the number of times participants shared their story of faith within a five-year period following the class, however, most of the growth is anecdotal. As with the Fruit of the Spirit, the student's growth can be seen by their transformed lives. In post-class evaluations (discussed further below), they reported knowing God more deeply, understanding grace, forgiveness, and shame in new ways and in post-class interviews with the author, every single student mentioned their new capacity to understand themselves as God's beloved. Clearly the author needs to develop new tools for measuring growth and development; the student's desire to take additional classes of the same nature and style was its own strong statement; they showed up with their entire beings, worked at being transparent and honest with themselves and one another and though they found it very challenging, experienced transformation. The post-class interviews also revealed that 75 percent of the students continued to practice one or more forms of spiritual discipline they learned and practiced in class. Practice does indeed make permanent.

A list of project resources was compiled. This included technical support needed, books to purchase, curriculum development, and additional logistics regarding room reservations. Administrative staff at UPC helped to arrange rooms and worked with the Communication team to develop a marketing plan. The marketing plan included pulpit

announcements, ads on Facebook, in the church bulletin, and posters in the hallways at UPC. The Communication Department created a unique logo for the class, which was duplicated and used on all the printed materials for students.

Evaluations and Ongoing Adjustments

Assessing the course as it progressed allowed the author the opportunity to fine-tune teaching methods and materials, responding quickly to student's needs. Each week the author utilized an evaluation form for students to complete an evaluation (See Appendix B). The goal of the evaluation form was to allow the author to learn what was connecting with students and where there were gaps in learning and understanding. Each week the author utilized these evaluations and made adjustments to the following week's class based on the students' responses. The evaluation forms offered a spot for students to enter their name, but it was optional. While helpful, the evaluation form needs to be redesigned for each week. A sample of Version 2 can be found in Appendix B.

The author could easily tell by the response from whom the comments came and often, the students did list their name on the form. There were several discoveries that were unsurprising to the author. The first question on the form: 'what was the most helpful part of this class?' received a variety of answers each week, just as expected. However, one thing that was consistent with the majority of the thirty students was the honesty and vulnerability with which they answered the question. Here are a few examples:

- Talking about who and why we are the way we are was good for me. I discovered I'm less alone than I thought! We had many shared

experiences in my group.

- Learning new ways to connect with God through the spiritual exercise tonight was awesome. Hard AND good!
- Hearing feedback from the people in my triad was so good for me! They can see good things in me that I can't see myself. What a gift.
- Discovering that I need to be as gracious with myself as God is with me was good and challenging. Discovering shame is universal was huge!
- LOVED the list of good questions (open-ended) I can use those with my co-workers, my friends, and even my family.
- The homework assignment of listening to someone for 5 minutes was completely amazing; life changing for me. I asked my husband if he would be my guinea pig; I asked him a question and listened...20 minutes later he said: I haven't felt this loved since we were first married (12 years ago). I feel seen and heard, I feel deeply loved. THANK YOU, COURTNEY!

'What was the most challenging part of this class?' is the second question on the form and many students reported working in dyads and triads was the biggest challenge for them. The vast majority of them had little to no practice offering the attentive presence required to listen well to another. During these listening exercises students noted they discovered great weaknesses in their capacity as active listeners. They also found that sharing honestly, while someone listened attentively was challenging. Here are a few sample responses:

- Simply listening in the dyad was SO hard! I wanted to move to affirming comments too quickly and they were not received. Ugh!
- Choosing to speak honestly in the dyad was very hard for me. After I shared (about my ADHD) I knew it was the right choice, but I almost didn't do it.
- Learning to receive kindness and the full attention of the other person listening in my dyad made me very uncomfortable. But I'll be back next

week.

- Keeping my mouth shut during listening is killing me! I suck at this!
- WHOA! I had no idea that learning to bracket my own emotions and thoughts would be so hard. I confess that while I listened, I was constantly thinking about myself. DANG!

The next question on the form: ‘What was unclear or difficult to understand?’ was most helpful in editing content for future classes and fine-tuning the following week’s lesson. Early on, it became clear that the reading assignments were too lengthy and that the students, who were mostly professionals and a small number of retirees, preferred visual tools alongside their outlines and handouts. The vast majority of students had great capacity as visual and experiential learners. This confirmed the author’s earlier presupposition that learning within the church must take place in new ways. Additionally, as expected, each student as a unique child of God struggled with unique challenges in the class. Most notably, many comments were received from the introverts in the class. They required time for reflection between learning input and sharing in dyads or triads. Adjustments were made early on. Here are a few responses representing the wide variety of feedback received.

- There was a lot of talking this week; from the front and around the classroom and I think better in silence. This class requires my full attention.
- I needed to take the quotes, notes, and Bible verses home to read and let them percolate to better understand them. They’re hard to absorb in class.
- It took some time to quiet my inner voice for the Lectio Divina exercise.
- It’s a real challenge and hard to move cold turkey from discussion and lecture to talking about something painful in a dyad or triad.

- I need more time before I share when we go from the bigger class to dyads. I have to think about what I'm going to say.

Telling Stories of Faith

Due to the fact that one of the primary outcomes desired was the student's capacity to practice telling their story of faith, student engagement on that practice is particularly important. While some responded as expected, the author was genuinely surprised at the number of students (over 85 percent) who stated they had not previously shared their story and while challenging, they found great value in the exercise.

- Hearing one another's stories, sharing my story...your words were a blessing and gave me courage!
- This class was painful and good for me. Hearing other's stories gave me the courage to share mine for the first time.
- Throughout the class weeks I found myself battling old internal messages. When I wrote out my story of faith and shared it I could see HOW GOOD God has been to me! Thank you!
- By writing and sharing my story I realize just how blessed I am. it makes me want to tell everyone I know how good God is. Of course, we learned to listen here too, so I won't just blabber on and on!
- The emotional pain I experience in my life is often SO intense. The release of that pain and thinking through and writing out where I've seen God at work in my life (which I'd never done before) has helped me face each day in a new way. Thank you!
- I loved hearing other people's stories; hearing how God showed up in their lives made me reconsider where he's been at work in my life. WOW, God is GOOD!

Developing Additional Leaders and the Author's Learnings

Originally, the author intended to utilize several staff and lay leaders to teach the course, however, for this pilot only the author taught due to time limitations of other

leaders. The author remains convinced that utilizing different teachers would be of great benefit to the Bold Love students; they could hear the stories and gain the expertise of several individuals, which would broaden their thinking. It should be noted, that due to the success of the Bold Love pilot, the course will be offered again at UPC in Fall 2016 with additional individuals teaching. The sessions will be led by pastoral staff and other lay leaders, including elders.

An ongoing challenge the author faces at UPC is the lack of spiritual formation in our leadership. The author's role has recently been redesigned to spiritually equip and form leaders across all platforms at UPC including the Elders, Deacons, and all laity. One elder, assigned to the author has been a delightful surprise. Trained as a mediator, she is in her final year as a Ruling Elder on Session. Her growth over the last ten months has been stunning; when personally invited by the author to some new learning experiences, including reading, reflections, spiritual formation exercises and spiritual direction, including extended, regular meetings with the author, this Elder is giddy about her new understanding of herself and God and excited to step into teaching Bold Love in its next iteration. This has confirmed the notion that discipleship happens relationally, following in the model of Jesus and Paul as stated earlier in this project. Investing several hours each month in an individual determined and committed to growing in their faith is the best possible method of discipleship. While this cannot be accomplished by only one pastor or lay leader, by equipping even this one Elder it is clear that she can now go on to equip others. So while only having discovered one leader willing and able to make the large investment of time and effort it take to practice becoming formed in the image of Christ, the author is encouraged that growth can continue exponentially within UPC. We

are called to make disciples who make disciples fulfilling the Great Commission to which every follower of Jesus is called.

There are several segments of the Bold Love class that could be taught by lay leaders or guest speakers. Specifically the classes in the areas of psychology such as: Week 8: Feelings, Shame and Grace, and Week 9: Assertiveness, Boundaries, and Co-dependence. There was clear value in having the author with the students throughout the ten-week series as her own stories and pastoral presence set the tone and established an environment of trust within the classroom. That said, the voices and experiences of other leaders would be of great benefit to the students as well. It is the author's goal to invite a few others to teach, including the aforementioned Elder, during the next iteration of Bold Love.

The demographics of the students in Bold Love must also be reconsidered for future iterations of the class. It was clear from the pilot that age and stage significantly impact a person's capacity to reflectively consider their life story. While some young adults may have deep experience in grief or loss, it was the author's experience that most of them were still too young to consider their Family of Origin with any objectivity. It may be wise to break out future classes in a form such as this: 18-25, 26-35, 35 and above.

Conclusion: Bold Love's Impact and Future

New resources will be sought on an ongoing basis each time the course is taught. The author was delighted by the outcome of the course. The students each reported growth in all areas, emotional healing, spiritual formation, including spiritual practices, and each of them had an opportunity to share and practice sharing their story of faith. At the close of

the course, many of the students approached the author and ask if additional classes could be taught to continue developing and equipping information and spiritual practices. Here are a few examples of their responses:

- This class carried me through a crisis of faith. You challenged me to face my fears.
- This class was disruptive in a very good way. There were several themes that led me to much deeper thought and prayer. You challenged my view of myself and of God and invited me to be kinder to myself and see how much God loves me. I am part of his family and the church family. I am forever changed.
- The spiritual exercises brought God's holiness to light in amazing ways for me. Thank you!
- I think God wanted me to be here to deal with many issues in my life. It's been hard, but such a blessing. I know God and myself (and a few of the classmates) far better now.
- I loved working HARD in this class; you didn't spoon feed us, but invited us to participate in our own growth (okay, you really told us WE have the privilege of growing and you're right)! I always thought going to classes to learn about the Bible was the same thing as growing now I can see I was WRONG!

The real fruit of the project will be evident as the students interact with people in their daily lives outside of the classroom beginning with the first week and continuing throughout their lifetime. Here are a few responses to the question "What impact has Bold Love had in your life?"

- I am a MUCH better listener. Even my six year-old said: Mommy, you're doing great in your class. I know because you don't interrupt me so much now!
- As I am learning to see myself with more grace – as God's beloved – I'm more able to see those around me as God's beloved, too. The biggest shock for me is the grace and patience I'm showing with a couple of difficult people in my life. SURPRISE!
- After we told our stories of faith in class I began praying about a mom on my son's soccer team. She seems interested in my faith journey and I asked her to

coffee. Eventually, we began talking about God and while I didn't tell the story I told in class, I was able to talk about God's presence in my life each day and how his love comforts me in hard times. For me, that's a huge start!

As noted, the class will be offered again with the changes mentioned earlier in teaching staff. Overall, the curriculum will remain intact, however, the author expects to continually make changes in the lessons as students complete evaluations. One benefit of the experience gained by teaching the class last year is that the author has more teaching experience and has re-shaped the classes based on the evaluations of the students. Many valuable lessons were learned in the first offering. Things such as allowing time for introverts to process before asking them to begin working in dyads and triads, moving the interactive and listening portions to earlier in each class session, and placing homework assignments directly into the syllabus rather than giving them out at each class session, are simple and significant changes that will be made.

The overarching shape and outline of the class will be retained from the pilot. As mentioned, a handful of experts will be asked to join the teaching team for the next iteration of Bold Love. With each class there will certainly be different dynamics at work, based on the different individuals gathered in the room. The author learned in the pilot that inviting students younger than thirty years old created a challenge. They had a somewhat narrower and naïve view of their families of origin, and faced significantly fewer challenges in adult life than the others in class. While this did not create any resistance to learning, they often commented on their lack of hard stories to tell when working in dyads and triads. Conversely, they gained skills in setting boundaries and conflict resolution that they will utilize for a decades to come.

In summary, the first offering of Bold Love at UPC was a success. It was a deep privilege to see the fruit of the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of the students. Overall, the class achieved its stated purpose to offer students the opportunity be shaped as disciples. Covering both spiritual formation and emotional growth and healing; the intersection of these were addressed within an environment of honesty, trust, and safety and assisted in developing courage in the hearts and souls of the participants. Bold Love offered students the opportunity to discover their identity as God's beloved child, grow in their understanding and ability to tell the story of God at work in their life, and grow in gratitude and freedom as they reflected on God's power and love at work in their healing.

APPENDIX A

UPC's breakdown in age and gender indicates that there is a large population of adults over 35. These are all potential candidates for the Bold Love Initiative.

Row Labels	Count of Membership Status	
<75	462	
Female		290
Male		172
>18	20	
Female		15
Male		5
18-20	38	
Female		18
Male		20
21-25	85	
Female		51
Male		34
26-35	264	
Female		151
Male		113
36-45	438	
Female		263
Male		175
46-55	603	
Female		363
Male		240
56-65	740	
Female		425
Male		315
66-75	580	
Female		337
Male		243
Unknown	47	
Female		33
Male		14
Grand Total	3277	

Class Guidelines

EXPECTATIONS

Please make every effort to be here on time, settled in, and ready to begin. Late arrivals are disruptive. If you are unavoidably hindered from arriving on time, please find your seat quickly and quietly. Turn your cell phone off.

Regular attendance is expected. If you must miss a class (because you're sick, or out of town), plan to either get the material from a classmate or email Becky and request it (beckyr@upc.org).

COMMITMENT

- Make punctuality and attendance a priority
- Be emotionally present, honest, and real
- Give support and encouragement to each other
- Be thankful for and open about feedback
- Share your stories, including joys and struggles
- Hold in confidence all that is shared in class
- Seek to grow in faith, love, and understanding
- Be open to God surprising you
- Pray for one another
- Set aside time on a regular basis to be nourished spiritually

HOPE

There may be times when an issue touches you deeply. If you have questions, need to talk, or be prayed with or for, please email me courtneyg@upc.org and we will set an appointment. If there is an emergency you may reach me on my cell: 925.413.7310

SUGGESTIONS

To help you make the most of your experience in this class:

- Be willing to take the initiative and fully participate, especially during the small group experiences.
- Be vulnerable. The more honest you are about yourself, your emotions, and your life, the more light and growth you will experience. Truth is your friend.
- Be honest about giving and receiving feedback. If you have a negative reaction to something, address it with the group or the person.
- Be emotionally present. Speak from your heart rather than your opinions. Be there for others, without trying to fix or give advice. We often advise in order to avoid.
- Be willing to ask for additional help and support if you need it.
- Be open to what God has to teach you, how he wants to mold you, surprise you, love you, and grow you through this experience.
- No interrupting.
- Bring your whole self.
- Use 'I' statements.
- Maintain confidentiality.

BOLD LOVE Class Covenant

I will be in attendance at all sessions of the Bold Love Workshop.

I will let Courtney know ahead of time, when possible, if I have to miss class.

I will complete all the reading assignments on time.

I will arrive on time.

I will participate fully in the classroom activities.

I will willingly receive direction and supervision during practice sessions.

I will give leadership regular feedback and evaluation.

I will respect and strictly maintain the confidentiality of everyone involved in the program with respect to all personal information shared during the course. I understand that a breach of confidentiality may result in being required to drop the class.

Name (print) _____ Date _____
Signature _____

Lesson Plan
Bold Love
Week 1: Beloved
Learning goal: Introductions, God invites us to shine brightly, discovering our belovedness

TIME	METHOD	OUTLINE
6:30	lecture	gather/greet/introductions name only
7:00	lecture	review schedule, guidelines, covenant, confidentiality
7:10	exercise	introduction questions, see notes
7:50	break	
8:10	video/discuss	Akeela and the Bee/ your own magnificent self
8:45	circle exercise	who's in the room/FOO questions
9:25	prayer	

Week 1: Beloved – Teaching Notes

Who's in the room: circle questions – step in if...

You're an only child; you're the oldest in your family; you're the youngest in your family; one of more than 4 siblings; from a divorced family; married; single; have children; have grandchildren...

INSIDE OUT

Self-Care; A Theology of Personal Empowerment and Spiritual Healing, Ray S. Anderson states this succinctly; "Only when human selfhood is understood as a unity of personal being, with the self and others, is the divine image moving toward completion and wholeness."¹⁰⁹ God intends to transform the whole of us for his divine purposes in the world. As God functions relationally in the Trinity, so too, we understand our identity as we interact with others. "Self-identity is grounded in relationship, both social

¹⁰⁹ Ray S. Anderson, *Self-Care; A Theology of Personal Empowerment and Spiritual Healing*. CA: Fuller Seminary Press, 2000, 22.

and spiritual. Thus, we cannot have a positive and healthy spiritual relationship with God...without positive and healthy relations with others.”¹¹⁰

Akeelah and the Bee (3-9) Movie CLIP - Our Deepest Fear (2006) HD.mp4

GOD’S WORD ABOUT SHINING BRIGHTLY

Daniel 12:3 The Message:

“Men and women who have lived wisely and well will shine brilliantly, like the cloudless, star-strewn night skies. And those who put others on the right path to life will glow like stars forever.”

So why don’t we shine?

Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the Beloved. Being the beloved expresses the core truth of our existence.

Are you running in circles, looking for someone or something able to convince you of your belovedness?

It comes only from the inside out.

Annie LaMott: the soul rejoices when it hears what it already knows...

Someone has noticed my uniqueness and expressed a desire to know me, to come closer to me, to love me!

We want to begin unmasking the self as designed by God; unmask lies and self as defined by others.

1. Discover truth
2. Find places in your life where the truth is spoken
3. Live in gratitude
4. Reveal to others their choseness

Share my personal story of discovering my belovedness.

WHAT OLD MESSAGES DO YOU NEED TO STOP LISTENING TO?

¹¹⁰ Ray S. Anderson, Self-Care; *A Theology of Personal Empowerment and Spiritual Healing*. CA: Fuller Seminary Press, 2000, page 115.

GOD'S TRUTH:

Ephesians 4:1-8

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

LAY YOUR LIFE BEFORE GOD

Romans 12:2 The Message

12 ¹⁻² So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

VOICES OF CRITICISM:

VOICES OF LOVE:

Lesson Plan

Bold Love

Week 2: Blessed

Learning goal: Discover how we are called to be a blessing to others; unbinding them as when Jesus called the community to unbind Lazarus. Practice good listening skills and open-ended questions.

TIME	METHOD	OUTLINE
6:30		gather/greet
6:40	share	share written paragraph re journaling homework
7:00	prayer of Examen	explain and lead in prayer
7:15	lecture	empathetic listening skills/non-verbal comm
7:45	stories	Lazarus, Jim Sweeney
8:05	break	
8:25	lecture	introduce Strengthsfinder
8:45	video	It's Not About the Nail
9:00	triads	person of positive impact
9:25	close in prayer	

Week 2: Blessed - Teaching Notes

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2

There is little or no neutral territory between the land of the blessed and the land of the cursed. You have to choose where it is that you want to live, and that choice is one that you have to keep making from moment to moment. Henri Nouwen

PRACTICE EXERCISE 1: Listening

Decide whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE:

1. _____ Listening is hard work.
2. _____ Everyone is a good listener.
3. _____ The most important thing for a good listener to do is want to be a good listener.
4. _____ People need other people to listen to them

5. _____ Your body position has little to do with your listening.
6. _____ Some places are better for listening than others.
7. _____ Listening does not involve talking.
8. _____ Listening involves more than just hearing the words people are saying.
9. _____ Listening to someone shows that you care for that person.
10. _____ “Just” listening is often the very best thing you can do to help someone.

DISCUSS

Communication Skills

QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE LISTENER

There are some basic characteristics that we look for in those who wish to minister in any type of caregiving. These are: spiritual maturity, psychological stability, a love for and interest in people, availability, teachability, accountability, and an unshakable commitment to confidentiality.

There are five essential qualities that enable you to be an effective caregiver. These are: **empathy, authenticity, unconditional acceptance, self-understanding, and humility.**

1) EMPATHY

Intellectual consideration: you think with the person.

Sympathy: you feel for the person.

Empathy: you feel *with* the person

2) AUTHENTICITY

3) UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance doesn't mean you never question a person's behavior. It means the worth and value of the other person is intrinsic and unquestioned. In your heart and in your head you have to believe that the person is worthy of your unconditional love, not because of anything the person has or hasn't done, but because the person was made in the image of God and is a child of God.

4) SELF-UNDERSTANDING

5) HUMILITY

6) W.A.I.T. Why Am I Talking?

The Nature of Communication

Spoken Word	7%
Body Posture and Gestures	38%
Tone of Voice and Inflection	55%

Body posture, gestures, tone of voice, and inflection comprise 93% of communication. In other words, the old antic “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it” is more accurate than you might think. Inflection and emphasis you place on certain words have a lot to do with the message that you are communicating. This fact is to your advantage when you don’t know what to say, considering it makes up very little of what is actually communicated.

It’s Not About the Nail Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHrOg>

TRIADS: as you work in triads you will have the opportunity to observe someone else listening, serve as the listener, and as the speaker. You will only have 7 minutes apiece. Pay close attention as you observe the other listener; seek to discover the positive ways in which they are listening. Keep in mind that non-verbal communication is very important and don’t forget W.A.I.T! **WAIT: Why Am I Talking!**

Lesson Plan

Bold Love

Week 3: Broken

Learning goal: Recognize that we are all broken and that learning to embrace our brokenness is part of following Jesus.

TIME	METHOD	OUTLINE
6:30		gather/greet
6:40	review	review ?s from class eval
7:00	reflection	Psalm 139/time in the wilderness
7:15	ppt	Broken/sincere
7:30	break	
7:50	triads	open-ended ?s/masked self
8:20	lecture	transference/FOO
8:45	dyads	negative messages/telling the truth @ brokenness
9:00	discussion	whole class/FOO?s/reflections
9:25	close in prayer	

Week 3: Broken - Teaching Notes

Suffering is both universal and unique. No two people experience things exactly in the same way. Likewise, each of us has the opportunity to determine how we will move through our brokenness. Will we face it or hide in shame? Nouwen reminds us that our brokenness is visible and tangible, concrete and specific.¹¹¹ He challenges us, as Jesus challenges us, to know our pain, face it and allow God to heal us. “The deep truth is that our human suffering need not be an obstacle to the joy and peace we so desire, but can become, instead, the means *to* it.”¹¹² Bonhoeffer states that “Faith reaches for the hand of God and finds it torn by the nails which bound Christ to the cross.”¹¹³ It is only when we can receive God’s mercy and grace for us that we can extend it to others. Our own messy past is useful in God’s economy. It is a fact, only the forgiven can mediate

¹¹¹ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*, NY: CrossRoad, 1992, page 85.

¹¹² Ibid, pages 95-96.

¹¹³ Ray S. Anderson, *Self-Care; A Theology of Personal Empowerment and Spiritual Healing*. CA: Fuller Seminary Press, 2000, 197.

forgiveness.¹¹⁴ Only those who have received Jesus' healing for their wounds can allow those scars to become character that reflect God's glory and grace to those around us.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT SHAME:

Most everyone walks through a valley of shame now and then. Some of us, however, take a lifelong lease on shame; it is our permanent home. We are shame-bound.
Lewis Smedes

Anderson notes:

- The experience of being shamed has no motivating power toward health.
- When we think of atonement for sin as a removal of guilt we must also understand that it has not produced wholeness and health within until the effects of shame on one's personal being have been overcome.
- The purpose of divine forgiveness is not merely to pardon sin as a legal or objective fault, but to overcome shame which has weakened and destroyed the inner being of the self. Thus, atonement must also deal with the overcoming of shame.

REMBRANT'S PRODIGAL SON PAINTING ON PPT
3 min of silent reflection.

****REFLECTON/DISCUSSION: CONFESSION/SHAME/FREEDOM:**

Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.
John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

“The less fear and shame can constrain us and shape how we speak, live, and die the more gratitude and awe mold us to become like Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁵ Why do we need to

¹¹⁴ Ibid, page 181.

¹¹⁵ Dan. B Allender, *The Healing Path*, CO: WaterBrook Press, 1991, page 184.

embrace our failures? Because they are a powerful part of our story; they allow us to see where we have failed and God has re-shaped us. Confession is part of healing.

“Confession,” for Augustine, has a double meaning. On the one hand, it refers to the free acknowledgement, before God, of the truth one knows about oneself—and this obviously meant, for Augustine, the confession of sins. But, at the same time, and more importantly, *confiteri* means to acknowledge to God the truth one knows about God. To confess is to praise and glorify God; it is an exercise in self-knowledge and true humility in the atmosphere of grace and reconciliation. Augustine explains, in a letter of 429, that his Confessions are to excite his readers’ mind and affections toward God, that they might “praise the righteous and good God as they speak either of my evil or good.”¹¹⁶

When we can offer our own honest story of death and resurrection, we invite others to this same freedom. Our brokenness will gradually come to be seen as an opening toward the full acceptance of ourselves as the Beloved.¹¹⁷

“...from the moment I was helped to experience my interpersonal addiction as a need for total surrender to a loving God who would fulfill the deepest desires of my heart, I started to live my dependency in a radically new way. Instead of living it in shame and embarrassment, I was able to live it as an urgent invitation to claim God’s unconditional love for myself, a love I can depend on without any fear.”¹¹⁸ – or shame!

It all gets back to this: We need to recognize that we are accepted not only in spite of our undeserving, but because of our worth.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Brian A. Williams, *The Potter’s Rib*, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2005, page 124.

¹¹⁷ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*, NY: CrossRoad, 1992, page 100.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, page 101.

¹¹⁹ Ray S. Anderson, *Self-Care; A Theology of Personal Empowerment and Spiritual Healing*. CA: Fuller Seminary Press, 2000, page 161.

EXERCISE: BRAVE

WE live in a broken, messy world filled with pain and hurt. Sometimes we do things to bring pain upon ourselves, sometimes the pain is due to the actions of someone else. When we're in pain we need comfort, we need healing, we need compassion.

The heart of compassion is acceptance.

This is true about compassion toward another.

It is also true about compassion toward self.

Acceptance comes when we are brave; when we stare trouble in the face.

Psalm 71 17-24 talks about facing trouble and moving on from trouble and living life in FREEDOM and with JOY!

READ MSG VERSION

Think of a time when you have been afraid to speak some truth aloud. To stare trouble in the face.

I feel inadequate every day.

I'm gay.

I'm a total screw up and nobody really knows it.

I was abused.

I was the target of a bully.

I never feel like I belong.

The crap, the hard stuff in life can stick to us. How do we get rid of it; clean it off or get unstuck? The first step is to have the courage to speak about it; secrets lose their power when exposed. Shame and pain that are revealed can be healed and hearts and minds renewed.

Studies show that children who've lost a parent and have a safe place to process the pain of their loss; to have the pain, sorrow, and fear honored go on to live very fulfilled lives.

Those children whose pain has not been acknowledged go on to struggle in profound ways in their careers, personal lives and with a variety of addictions.

When pain is exposed and validated we can process it...actually move THROUGH it and then move on without the burdensome weight of the pain.

Shame grows when it is kept secret and silent.

(Scott story)

To be utterly exposed and loved and accepted at the same time is an enormous gift. How do we become resilient? Researcher Brene Brown – the gifts of imperfection... "Resilience is often the slow unfolding of understanding."

When we begin to accept our own flaws and mistakes (let's just go ahead and call it SIN!) we are then far more able to accept the flaws, mistakes and foibles (Yep, sin again) of others. We become authentic people, Brown: Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It's about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be seen. We either live in authenticity or fear. Caution: if you trade in your authenticity for safety, you may experience the following: anxiety, depression, eating disorders, addiction, rage, blame, resentment, and inexplicable grief. Yep, it's that bad.

TODAY, I invite you to be **BRAVE**.

Our past, especially our pain holds the key to our future and to the joy set before us. It is only when we 'stare trouble in the face' and invite God to reveal a healing path, with faithful journey partners that we begin to transform those scars into character.

The painful stories of your life matter. Begin practicing telling a story of pain today. And when you listen to the story of another, practice being a person of hope. 'Hope looks at the shattered remnants of the soul hit by the storm and envisions not merely rebuilding, but rebuilding a life that has even more purpose and meaning than existed before the loss.'

Sara Bareilles~BRAVE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUQsqBqxoR4>

You can be amazing
You can turn a phrase into a weapon or a drug
You can be the outcast
Or be the backlash of somebody's lack of love
Or you can start speaking up
Nothing's gonna hurt you the way that words do
And they settle 'neath your skin
Kept on the inside and no sunlight
Sometimes a shadow wins
But I wonder what would happen if you

Say what you wanna say
And let the words fall out
Honestly I wanna see you be brave

With what you want to say
And let the words fall out
Honestly I wanna see you be brave

I just wanna see you
I just wanna see you
I just wanna see you
I wanna see you be brave

Everybody's been there, everybody's been
stared down
By the enemy
Fallen for the fear and done some

disappearing
Bow down to the mighty
Don't run, stop holding your tongue
Maybe there's a way out of the cage where you live
Maybe one of these days you can let the light in
Show me how big your brave is

Say what you wanna say
And let the words fall out
Honestly I wanna see you be brave

With what you want to say
And let the words fall out
Honestly I wanna see you be brave

Innocence, your history of silence
Won't do you any good
Did you think it would?
Let your words be anything but empty
Why don't you tell them the truth?

Say what you wanna say
And let the words fall out
Honestly I wanna see you be brave

With what you want to say
And let the words fall out
Honestly I wanna see you be brave

I just wanna see you
 I just wanna see you
 I just wanna see you
 I wanna see you be brave

I just wanna see you
 I just wanna see you
 I just wanna see you
 I wanna see you be brave

Lesson Plan
Bold Love

Week 4: Being/Belonging

Learning goal: We all long to belong, we are all vulnerable; this can be a strength!

TIME	METHOD	OUTLINE
6:30		gather/greet
6:40	review	review ?s from class eval
7:00	Lectio Divina	John 8:1-11
7:15	triads	difficult people
7:35	break	
8:00	triads	Strengthsfinder results reflections
8:45	video	Brene Brown Ted Talk
9:00	discussion	what connected in Brown's book/talk?
9:25	close in prayer	

Week 4: Being/Belonging - Teaching Notes

TRIAD: tell a story of a difficult person in your life. Be honest. Please do not use their actual name. Talk about the triggers, the ways in which they are challenging for you. Remember, listeners – ask OPEN-ENDED questions. (See below).

EMPATHIC RESPONSE LEADS

You seem to be saying

As I understand it, you felt

Listening to you, it seems that

If I'm hearing you correctly . . .
To me, it's almost like you're saying . . .
I sense what you feel . . .
What I think you're saying is . . .
I wonder if you're expressing a concern about . . .
It sounds as if you're feeling . . .
You seem to place a high value on . . .
You feel, perhaps . . .
Your message seems to be . . .
As I hear it, you seem to be feeling . . .
You seem to convey a sense of . . .
The thing you feel most right now is sort of like . . .
You appear to be saying . . .
So, as you see it . . .
It sounds as if you're indicating that . . .
I'm picking up that you . . .
I gather . . .
You appear . . .

The reason I like the Strengthsfinder (SF) indicator is that it doesn't limit anyone to only a small number of roles/strengths. Having used it in the past with adults, teens, and college students, I have found it to be VERY helpful as the strengths articulated are at the same time broad and focused. As you saw when you took the test, you came out with 5 TOP strengths. We will work in triads tonight to talk about how we felt about those top 5 strengths, how those are connected to our understanding of our spiritual gifts. Part of your homework this week is to ask three people who know you well to read your five strengths and get their perspectives on these. When I first took SF I thought one of my strengths was TOTALLY wrong until I asked my covenant group. They helped me see while it was not articulated in a way that initially connected with me; I did indeed exhibit all of the characteristics of these strengths. Unlike Meyers Briggs indicator, this addresses not only how you process information, but also how you see yourself fitting into the world around

you. I have found it to be a very valuable tool and hope you will too. You can make an individual appointment to meet with me to review your results at any time!

Brene Brown TED Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCvmsMzlF7o>

Lesson Plan

Bold Love

Week 5: Bestowed

Learning goal: We carry hope when others cannot. What does it look like to be a carrier of hope?

TIME	METHOD	OUTLINE
6:30		gather/greet
6:40	review	review ?s from class eval
7:00	<i>Lectio Divina</i>	Psalm 62:5, 2Cor 3:12, Hebrews 6:19
7:15	video	Freedom Writers
8:00	break	
8:20	triads	faith journey & fear
8:50	lecture	Carriers of Hope
9:20	video	Soul Pancake: the Science of Happiness
9:25	close in prayer	

Week 5: Bestowed - Teaching Notes

Freedom Writers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PahVp7p3XHg>

“It is from one person to another that the heavenly bread of self being is passed”¹²⁰
Martin Buber

¹²⁰ Gary Sattler and Tom Schwanda; Spiritual Leadership through Mentoring: Ancient Wisdom for Contemporary Practices, Class Notes, Fuller Seminary, Summer 2012.

“As hope is a focus on the future, faith is a reflection on the past.... The more we hope, the more we lean into the future, risking the present to secure the dreams that entice us.”¹²¹

Proverbs 13:12

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

SUMMARY OF JESUS’ MENTORING APPROACH:

- Uncover and reveal the mystery.
- Call people to be awake.
- Freedom of the Spirit.
- Jesus always honored the individual.

Hope looks at the shattered remains of the soul hit by the storm and envisions not merely rebuilding, but rebuilding a life that has even more purpose and meaning than existed before the loss...Hope takes the experience of loss and powerlessness and uses it as the raw material for writing a new and unexpected story.¹²²

Hope is not naïve desire, but a calculated risk that declares, whatever the loss, it is better than remaining where we are.¹²³

Unhelpful *HOPE*

“In the giving it becomes clear that we are chosen, blessed, and broken not simply for our own sakes, but so that all we live finds its final significance in its being lived for (with) others.”¹²⁴

¹²¹ Dan. B Allender, *The Healing Path*, CO: WaterBrook Press, 1991, pages 24, 26.

¹²² *Ibid*, page 137.

¹²³ Brian A. Williams, *The Potter’s Rib*, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2005, page 88.

¹²⁴ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*, NY: CrossRoad, 1992, page 105.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 NIV

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

The Rescue; 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 MSG

All praise to the God and Father of our Master, Jesus the Messiah! Father of all mercy! God of all healing counsel! He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us. We have plenty of hard times that come from following the Messiah, but no more so than the good times of his healing comfort – we get a full measure of that, too.

Soul Pancake: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHv6vTKD6I>

Lesson Plan

Bold Love

Week 6: Welcome to the Priesthood

Learning goal: We are all competent ministers of the Gospel. Look back at how God has been at work in your life; we all lead with a limp.

<u>TIME</u>	<u>METHOD</u>	<u>OUTLINE</u>
6:30		gather/greet
6:40	review	review ?s from class eval
7:00	dyads	review letter of gratitude exercise
7:20	exercise	prayer of Examen
8:00	break	
8:20	lecture	leading with a limp
8:50	dyads	who me a priest?
9:20	close in prayer	

Week 6: Welcome to the Priesthood - Teaching Notes

We need encouragers who remind us of truth, draw near to offer support, and teach new paradigms of life – they are priests.

James 1:22-27

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

The Healing Path, Dan Allender, PH.D.

God promises us redemption, but his sacred path leads us away from safety, predictability, and comfort. Any attempt to fly over the dangerous terrain or make a detour to safer ground is doomed because it will not take us to God. Instead, it leads to a host of other idols that can't provide us with the confidence of faith, the dynamic of hope, or the passion of love we so deeply crave.

As hope is a focus on the future, faith is a reflection on the past.

What questions could you ask a Care Receiver in order to help them with hope or faith?

How have you seen God at work in your life?

In opening our arms (our souls, our ears) to another, we put out a welcome sign that implies we have made room for them inside ourselves. They are invited in as guests, not as strangers. For that reason, to the degree we open our arms, we are changed.

Faith is trust that comes from repeated encounters with a person who is solid and sure.

Just as faith is necessary to forming a solid, confident sense of identity, hope is crucial for the capacity to anticipate and shape the future for good. Our imagination grows in the soil of hope.

What questions could you ask that would invite someone to use their creative imagination and spark their hope?

The repeated patterns of the past clue us into the ways a person has tried to make their life work apart from God.

Reflecting on the future invites a person to consider their unformed potential to give and receive love.

Dreams disrupt our present commitments. My middle daughter, Amanda, wants to be a veterinarian, but she'd rather listen to music in her room and read novels than study science. I would like to lose weight, but I'm hungry now. **The future beckons, but the present shouts.**

How might this phrase be helpful to you as you meet with a friend?

Elizabeth and her Daddy story

***Changes That Heal*, Dr. Henry Cloud**

To the extent that you continue to see the world through your childhood eyeglasses, your past will be your future.

We internalize our parents' critical natures into a self-evaluating system that we call our conscience, and it speaks to us in much the same way that our parents did. If they were loving and accepting, our conscience is loving and accepting. If they were harsh and critical, our conscience is harsh and critical.

What questions could you ask if you notice this pattern of harshness?

HEALING IS A CHOICE: STEPHEN ARTERBURN

Any time we drag our past into the future, we have some grieving to do.

Dragging the past into our present and projecting it onto the future creates:
Hopelessness

Disempowerment

What questions could you ask if you notice your friend is dragging the past into the present?

Encouragement on the healing journey:

RISE

R:

Reduce the stress in your life by learning some new management skills.
Reduce conflicts that cause inner turmoil and difficulties in your relationships.
Reduce the negative patterns that have set in over your lifetime.
Reduce the substances you use to help cope with the pain in your life.

I:

Increase your self-awareness and how you affect people who interact with you.
Increase your awareness of your feelings.
Increase your understanding of yourself and why you do the things you do.
Increase your connection with others.
Increase your assertiveness in a way that draws people to you rather than repels them.
Increase the healthy influences in your life.
Increase your time and intimacy with God in the Bible and in prayer.

S:

Substitute positive emotions for negative ones.
Substitute the willingness to risk for fear.
Substitute humility for arrogance.
Substitute acceptance for anger.
Substitute peace for anxiety.
Substitute surrender for control.

E:

Eliminate addictive behaviors.
Eliminate a critical and judgmental spirit.
Eliminate certain repetitive sins in your life.

Work on your soul so that it heals NO MATTER the circumstances.

The more realistic your expectations are about your tough reality, the easier it will be to develop a life that is fulfilling as you walk out of your destructive ways and into the healing ways of God. Do not let unrealistic expectations cause you added frustrations that lead to giving up. DO NOT GIVE UP.

People often feel hopeless because they've been relying on their own power, not because there is no hope. We are called to be hopeful WITH and FOR others.

Where do you need to RISE in your life?

Lesson Plan
Bold Love
Week 7: Listening to the Holy Spirit
Learning goal: Practice, practice, practice. Learning to listen for the Spirit's small voice.

TIME	METHOD	OUTLINE
6:30		gather/greet
6:40	review	review ?s from class eval
7:00	video	Audrey Assad/Restless/getting quiet/rest w/God
7:15	dyads	it's hard to hear
7:45	break	
8:10	reflecting on art	Clouds, by Anne Davey
8:20	dyads	what did I feel/what did I hear
9:00	song	Good, good Father
9:20	close in prayer	

Week 7: Listening to the Holy Spirit- Teaching Notes

Psalm 62: 5-12

For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.
Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge
for us.
Selah

Audrey Assad and Matt Maher RESTLESS <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJW1RbNxgbU>

You dwell in the songs that we are singing,
Rising to the Heavens,
Rising to your heart, your heart.
Our praises filling up the spaces
In between our frailty and everything you are
You are the keeper of my heart

And I'm restless, I'm restless
'Til I rest in you, 'til I rest in you
I am restless, I'm restless
'Til I rest in you, 'til I rest in you
Oh God, I wanna rest in you

Oh, speak now for my soul is listening
Say that you have saved me,
Whisper in the dark, the dark.
'Cause I know you're more than my salvation
Without you I am hopeless, tell me who you are
You are the keeper of my heart
You are the keeper of my heart

And I'm restless, I'm restless
'Til I rest in you, 'til I rest in you
I am restless, I'm restless
'Til I rest in You, 'til I rest in you,
Oh, I wanna rest in you

Still my heart, hold me close
Let me hear, a still small voice
Let it grow, let it rise
Into a shout, into a cry

Still my heart, hold me close
Let me hear, a still small voice
Let it grow, let it rise
Into a shout, into a cry
And I am restless, I'm restless
'Til I rest in you, let me rest in you
And I am restless, so restless
'Til I rest in you, 'til I rest in you, Oh God
Let me rest in You.

Clouds: <http://www.explorefaith.org/prayer/meditation/art/clouds.php>

Good, good Father <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqybaIesbuA>

Lesson Plan

Bold Love

Week 8: Feelings and Shame, Forgiveness and Grace

Learning goal: Feelings are great slaves; boundaries are part of being gracious.

Looking anew at our Families of Origin. Pathways to forgiveness.

<u>TIME</u>	<u>METHOD</u>	<u>OUTLINE</u>
6:30		gather/greet
6:40	review	review ?s from class eval
7:00	story	feelings as slaves
7:15	dyads	I just can't forgive/I forgive easily
7:45	break	
8:10	lecture	shame/forgiveness/grace
8:30	write	FOO disquiet/unhealthy patterns
9:00	triads	what did I feel/learn/how was that?
9:20	close in prayer	

Week 8: Feelings, Shame, Grace and Forgiveness - Teaching Notes

“There are three kinds of forgiveness, all interrelated. There is *self-forgiveness*, which enables us to release our guilt and perfectionism. There is the *forgiveness we extend to others and receive from them*, intimates and enemies alike. And there is *God's forgiveness* that assures us of our worth and strengthens us for this practice.”

From: spiritualityandpractice.com

Forgiving yourself

Forgiveness exists already.

We do not and cannot

create it

earn it

demand it
expect it
grant it
We enter into it. We embrace it.

We talk about our “grievance story.” In your grievance story are you an innocent victim?

8 Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, ² but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. ³ As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.

⁴ “Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?”

⁶ They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. ⁷ They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” ⁸ Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

⁹ When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. ¹⁰ Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?”

¹¹ “No, Lord,” she said.

And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.” *Holy Bible : New Living Translation. (3rd ed.) Tyndale House Publishers. (2007).*

Do you think of God as a harsh judge?

Can you imagine hearing “Neither do I condemn you” from God?

1 John 1:8-9

⁸ If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth.

⁹ But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

Holy Bible : New Living Translation. (3rd ed.) Tyndale House Publishers. (2007).

Quiet time to reflect

Write down

Find someone you really trust to tell what you need to share about this.

What can I do to move toward forgiving myself and others?

Forgiving Others

Key Source: *Forgive for Good* by Fred Luskin, Ph.D.
Founder of The Forgiveness Project at Stanford
(<http://learningtoforgive.com>)

“Forgiving is difficult; this is the first thing we need to know. The second is that the first and often the only person to be healed by forgiveness is the person who does the forgiving.”

Lewis Smedes, Shame and Grace, p 136

“Bitterness that has good cause is difficult to release. Yet bitterness is a guarantee for depression and despair. Bitterness forces you to live in the past. Hope requires you to focus on the future. Only forgiveness sets you free.”

Edwin McManus, “Broken People Can Become Whole Disciples” in Leadership, Spring 2000, p. 52

“Bitterness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.”

Ron McManus in Leadership, Spring 2000, p. 73

“What is forgiveness? It is giving up hurt and anger that you may be entitled to have and hold. Forgiveness does not imply denying that you were mistreated, or forgetting your pain. It does not mean that you condone being hurt, or that you will stick around to let yourself get hurt by the same person who just finished hurting you.”

From Dr. David L. Kupfer, Ph.D.

Lesson Plan
Bold Love
Week 9: Assertiveness, boundaries, and co-dependence
Learning goal: Discover where you have good boundaries or none at all. Outline
ways to tell story of faith.

TIME	METHOD	OUTLINE
6:30		gather/greet
6:40	review	review ?s from class eval
7:00	exercise	Preparatory Prayer (Ignatian)
7:15	exercise	Boundaries Inventory
7:45	break	
8:10	discussion	whole class: boundaries, co-dependence
8:50	exercise	holy imagination; Luke 7, Matthew 3/Jesus'
9:05	lecture/discuss	how to tell your story of faith
9:25	close in prayer	

Week 9: Assertiveness, Boundaries, Co-Dependence - Teaching Notes

BOUNDARIES INVENTORY

Check the statements that remind you of yourself:

- ☐ I have difficulty differentiating between my own problems and someone else's; I worry as much about other's concerns as I do my own.
- ☐ I allow people to impose on me; I have trouble saying no, no matter how inconvenient or unreasonable the requests.
- ☐ I usually put my own needs behind everyone else's.
- ☐ If anything goes wrong, I jump to the conclusion that it's my fault; I tend to over-apologize for my mistakes or assumed mistakes.
- ☐ I am compliant; I have a strong tendency to conform to my environment, rather than to change it.

- ☐ I feel other people's feelings right along with them and often even more intensely than they do.
- ☐ I tend to think that my future lies in the hands of other people or circumstances, rather than within my own control.
- ☐ I experience difficulty in making decisions and continually ask for the advice of others.
- ☐ I am prone to guilt, fear, and worry.
- ☐ I usually assume my way is the right way.
- ☐ If things go wrong, I look for someone to blame.
- ☐ I am prone to anger.
- ☐ I refuse to give except on my own terms.
- ☐ I am often inflexible.
- ☐ I assume if others have problems it's probably their own fault.
- ☐ I have difficulty with compromise.
- ☐ I usually put my own needs ahead of everyone else's
- ☐ I always want to be in control.
- ☐ I make decisions with little regard as to how they will affect others.

The amygdala always defeats the cortex: your affective function always supersedes the factor/thought processes – hopefully, knowing this helps increase my wisdom...remember feelings always precede your thoughts – even in memory...most of the power resides in amygdala

You have said a hundred yesses before you get to the “fatal” yes. Temptation works this way: you might resist at first but acquiesce a little tiny bit at a time...

Temptation is normal, expected, and ordinary. Remember the angels come and minister to us – we have people come to minister to us because we NEED it!

- **“After-mentor”** after someone has crashed and needs help or after they’ve had a bad spiritual director or mentoring relationship, their pastor has let them down...
- **Would you care if people knew? How would I feel if my friends knew about this?**

The deepest places in a human being open up into the deepest places of God...

Your neuron patterns actually reshape when you are intimate involved with someone (i.e. actors working on a film together and work closely). Shared experience develops intimacy.

Bad boundaries are those we set in order to prevent appropriate intimacy, to hear unwanted news (especially about ourselves), to manipulate people

Boundaries aren’t aggressive; they are defensive. They keep out what is good and keep out what is bad.

Good boundaries:

- **Can be rigid...or flexible. Flexible and wishy-washy aren’t the same thing.**
- **Are established early. Silence is received as acceptance.**
- **Have to be believable and must be backed-up.**
- **Must be specific and clear.**
- **Show respect for your role and its responsibilities.**
- **Are ones you want your loved ones and congregation to emulate.**
- **Help remind us our position in the relationship – getting too comfortable with mentee, etc.**

So, why don’t we set boundaries? We have to be intentional.

TELLING OUR STORIES OF FAITH: HOMEWORK

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

1 Peter 3:15-16

The greatest good work we can do is share Jesus with others. People are looking for hope all around us; we have the answer right on our tongue! As you share your story of the Good News (of Jesus at work in your life) it will cause the revealing and the unveiling of the mystery of the Gospel to touch the lives of those around you.

Go to: <http://www.sapres.org/sermons/>

Follow the link to listen to Rev. Ron Brown's sermon: Created in Christ Jesus for Good Works (sermon date 2/15/15).

Crafting Your Spiritual Autobiography:

A spiritual autobiography is the story of God's interaction in our lives. It chronicles our pilgrimage as we seek to follow God.

Childhood, Young Adulthood, Thirties, Mid-life, Fifties, Retirement.

QUEST: when you sought to know God

COMMITMENT: when you came to know God

INCORPORATION: when you live out your commitment to God.

NOTE:

Encounters with God

Crises of Faith

Outcomes of Growth

Lesson Plan

Bold Love

Week 10: Telling our stories of faith

Learning goal: Practice telling our stories of faith to one another. Evaluate the whole term.

TIME	METHOD	OUTLINE
6:30		gather/greet
6:40	review	review ?s from class eval
7:00	lecture/reflect	what's a witness?
7:20	leader	story of faith told
7:30	write	work on story of faith
7:50	break	
8:10	triads	sharing our stories
8:50	discussion	whole class/how was that?
9:15	discussion	whole class/what have we learned together
9:25	close in prayer	

Bold Love Evaluation V1

Your name (optional)_____

What was the most helpful part of this class?

What was the most challenging part of this class?

What was unclear or difficult to understand?

Questions or comments:

Thanks for your helpful feedback!

Bold Love Evaluation V2 (sample Week 5)

In what ways are you learning about yourself as God's beloved child?

What connected most with you in the movie clip from Freedom Writers? How did it impact your view of yourself as co-authoring your life-story with God?

Where in your life did you discover you are holding hope for another?

If you practiced the exercise modeled in the Soul Pancake video whom would you call? Jot down a sentence or two about what you might say to that person in gratitude for their presence in your life.

What was the most helpful part of this class?

What was unclear or difficult to understand?

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